

Geographies of colour: Practices and performances of repair

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Declaration

I declare that this is my own work and that all other sources of information are cited accordingly.

Signed _____

Abstract

Despite its historical associations with excess and contamination, colour is increasingly being used as a popular transformative tool to revitalise bodies and spaces. In this thesis, I examine the variety of ways that colour is mobilised in the pursuit of repair. Traditional approaches used to explain feelings emerging from exposure to particular colours are overwhelmingly positivist, dominated by the biological and psychological sciences and present conflicting results. In contrast, my research is grounded in an ethnographic, geographical approach that examines colour from the scale of the city, the neighbourhood and the body, allowing for a more carefully considered, qualitative exploration between colour, human experience and space. Beginning with the scale of the city, the first part of this thesis concerns colour in the architectural imagination, examining the claims made by architects and artists working on the design of regeneration projects in London. Analysing the vitalist discourses embedded in the claims circulating around the use of colour, I examine how colour is perceived to perform repair amongst practitioners, with respect to the range of architectural imaginations of urban vitality. The second focus of this thesis is placed the neighbourhood level, framed within the politics of localism that seeks to empower communities. Focusing on the Dulux *Let's Colour* project, a scheme that donates paint to local communities to revitalise grey spaces, I examine the politics of nominated spaces 'in need' of colour and draw on my participation in an active community painting initiative, colouring a disused bingo hall in Barking, East London. Lastly, my investigation hones in to explore the relationship between colour, the body and emotion. Investigating the proliferation of new ludic colour experiences, such as colour runs, I explore the complexity of how emotional responses to colour in these events are orchestrated and experienced. From the perception of colour's therapeutic repair of bodies in the hospital, to the urban and social repair performed through local painting initiatives, my research critically examines how the contingent and affective chromatic materiality of our urban environment emerges in the claims, knowledge production and practices of colour in urban culture, architecture and health.

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Introduction



September 1995. Edi Rama, a young painter on a two-year fellowship at Cité Internationale des Arts, sits in his tiny Parisian apartment on the Rue du Faubourg-Saint-Antoine, making his *vie de Bohème*. Edi had art in his blood; his father, Kristaq, was a well-known sculptor. Like millions of other Albanians, Rama left his Balkan homeland in the nineties, disenchanted by the tendrils of mobsters, money launderers and corruption that spiralled and spewed out of the capital city, Tirana. Alongside painting in Paris, Rama made his way writing political columns for the local Tirana newspaper on everything he thought was wrong with Albania, describing them as his ‘bottles in the sea’.

On 3rd March 1997, the capital of Albania filled with smoke. Violent protesters took to the streets of Tirana, rioting against a fraudulent savings scheme that swept away many Albanians’ life savings. During the transition to a democratic government five years earlier, Tirana’s green spaces, city parks, boulevards and plazas were suffocated by a swarm of illegal buildings and concrete kiosks. Perforated with potholes and rotting in piles of rubbish, Tirana began to fall apart.

May 1998. Rama was back in Albania for his father’s funeral. One morning, the Albanian Prime Minister Fatos Nano, fresh out of jail, contacted Rama about joining the newly formed cabinet. Intent on turning things round for his native homeland and inspired by the memorable history his sculptor father left behind, Rama was appointed Albania’s new Minister of Culture. After a successful start in office, Rama won the Tirana Mayorship two years later in a landslide victory.

October 2000. A blaze of winding, colourful curves and dazzling polka dots cascade down the front of Tirana’s apartments. Bright, bold stripes disguise the once grey, Stalin-ist tower blocks. The drab architecture of Tirana’s communist era is injected with a new, colourful, palpable energy unlike anywhere else. Rama transformed his city into a cacophony of multicolour and with that, lifted the mood of the nation. “After 1997,” Rama said, “Albanians came to look on their country as a sort of transfer station between life and death. My real project is to try and resuscitate hope so that people will start looking on their country as...a place they might want to live.”¹

¹ Woodard, C. (2005) Trendy Tirana? Mayor invigorates a backwater capital. *The Christian Science Monitor*. March 23 2005. Retrieved from: <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0323/p01s03-woeu.html> [Accessed

Today, Tirana is a riot of colour.



Fig 1.1 New Tirana, 2016. Source: Timo Arnall.



Fig 1.2 Undulating rainbows, Tirana. Source: TED blog.

This thesis explores how colour and practice perform *repair*. In Edi Rama's huge chromatic intervention in Tirana, colour performed a range of material, urban and emotional repairs. Rejuvenating the architectural skin of the dour, communist-era buildings with new, bold colours gave the Albanian capital a rich and multi-coloured new façade. Steeped in vitalist discourses of newness, these transformations redefined Tirana as *a place they might want to live*. Restoring hope in a city blighted by corruption and poverty, Rama mobilised colour in order to fix his broken city in both social, urban, material and emotional ways. While scholarship on repair in urban geography and the social sciences has gained momentum in the last ten years in line with increased urbanisation, development and expanding infrastructure, the practice and performance of repair across different urban scales is under developed. More precisely, the ways urban spaces are chromatically changed queries the role colour plays in enacting repairs.

The powerful repair imagined through colour is not unique to Tirana. For example, the German *Call for Colourful Buildings*, dating back as early as 1901 by German architect Fritz Schumacher, promoted colour as a means to bring “cheer...in our grey times”, to the dilapidated façades of housing made after the Great War.² Colour in East German architecture in particular was bound up in the idealised conception of *Lebensfreude*, or ‘joy in life’, in order to conquer the depressing *Alltagsgrau* (everyday grey) that commonly characterised the German Democratic Republic. The German architect Bruno Taut, one of the pioneers of this movement alongside other leading modernists including the founder of the colourful Bauhaus School, Walter Gropius, championed colour as it is “not expensive like moulded decorations and sculptures... colour means a joyful existence... let blue, red, yellow, green, black and white radiate in crisp, bright shades to replace the dirty grey of cities.”³ In a quest to improve the everyday life of residents in housing estates, the emotional impact of colour and its vitalist imaginary was powered by a collection of agendas that sought to create pleasurable, joyful living environments. As a city in near equal transition to that of post-war Berlin, Rama's transformation of Tirana appears to take a cue from Taut. Whilst both these two colourful transformations are embedded in notions of vitalism and change, they both enact subtly different languages of repair. Edi

² Schumacher, F. (1901) Farbige Architektur. *Der Kunstwart: Rundschau über alle Gebeite des Schönen*, 20, no.2, pp. 297-302.

³ Taut, B (undated) in Doherty, G. (2010) *Urbanisms of Color*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. p. 54.

Rama spoke of the Tirana's 'resuscitation' from death. Bruno Taut's colourful architectures, on the other hand, were part of a wider pursuit to achieve 'joy' out of the dirty grey of cities.⁴ While both enact repair, the intentions, implications and context of each demonstrate subtle differences. The differences and characteristics of repair require greater examination.

Over 100 years later, colour's reparative imaginary continues to be expressed in a range of cultural, urban and architectural forms. In 2006, Dutch architects Haas and Hahn painted one of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's, most notoriously dangerous *favelas*, Praca Cantão, in the hope it would bring "colour and joy to these people [and] ignite personal and societal change on all levels."⁵ Since 2012, the multinational paint company Dulux's *Let's Colour* initiative has donated over 700,000 litres of paint to communities across the world in a large-scale scheme to 'bring places to life' through colouring local space.

The transformation of colour and space even seeps into the digital playscape. In the 2008 platform-puzzle video game *de Blob*, the fictional city 'ChromaCity' is taken over by an evil, monochromatic corporation called INKD. In the game, INKD has outlawed all colour - and fun - from the city. Controlling a large colourful Blob who rolls around the urban infrastructure, the objective of the game is to launch a 'colour revolution', successfully liberating the city of Chroma by splattering the city and citizens alike with colour.

The above examples of Tirana, Taut, Haas and Hahn, *Let's Colour* and *de Blob* reflect a wider notion of the emotionally charged capacity colour has to change not only the spaces around us, but the embodied, emotional reparative qualities of colour. One area that has been of particular interest is the relationship between colour and the body. The idea of colour's capacity to act on the body has resulted in a recent popular interest of colour's therapeutic value. For example, the surging popularity of contemporary adult colouring books, such as *The Enchanted Forest* (2015) and *The Mindfulness Colouring Book: Anti-stress Art* (2015), have sold over 12 million copies in the UK and triggered a nationwide pencil shortage in 2015.⁶ Marketed alongside

⁴ See: Rama, E. (2012) *Edi Rama: Take back your city with paint*. TED talks. [video] Available at: https://www.ted.com/talks/edi_rama_take_back_your_city_with_paint [Accessed 13 December 2016].

⁵ Favela Painting. (2017) Retrieved from <https://www.favelapainting.com/>. [Accessed 20 February 2017]

⁶ Armstrong, A. (2016) "Adult colouring books targeted by HMRC scribblers" *The Telegraph*. 23 May 2016. Retrieved from: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2016/05/22/adult-colouring-books-targeted-by-hmrc-scribblers/> [Accessed Jul 6 2017]

mindfulness practices, these accessible techniques were inspired from Carl Jung's early twentieth century psychotherapy, these meditative techniques are a contemporary expression of colour's role in self-help therapy.⁷

Colour's vital materiality and impact on the body has seen an emergence of running events where bodies mix with colourful matter like *The Color Run*.⁸ Advertised as the 'happiest' 5k on the planet, colour runs have been so popular that the total distance covered by participants exceeds over 15,500,000 miles; the equivalent of 622 times around the world.⁹ Other events involving colour, including a number of other 5k colour races and Holi festivals taking place in other contexts, celebrate healthiness, happiness, joy and conviviality. The intricate making of happiness in events like *The Color Run* is a productive lens in which to think more carefully about the relationships between bodies and emotion in the social, convivial spaces of these new cultural forms and the repairs that are enacted.

The complicated relationship between colour and emotion, however, is notoriously challenging to empirically examine. One of the first examinations of the psychology of colour came from Johann Wolfgang van Goethe's treatise *Theory of Colours*, first published in 1810.¹⁰ Goethe's observations, refuting Newton's colour spectrum, was derived from his artistic intuition. More than two hundred years later and the study of colour and emotion continues to intrigue, complicate and contradict. Furthermore, a deeper consideration of the history of colour reveals a paradox that problematises colour's practical application. David Batchelor draws out the negative associations and historical marginalisation of colour:

It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that, in the West, since Antiquity, colour has been systematically marginalised, reviled, demonised and degraded.¹¹

This loathing of colour, viewed as a corrupting and contaminating material, is called Chromophobia. Likened to a phobic disorder, this 'fear' of colour works against the vitalist discourses presented by the examples of Tirana or *The Color Run*.

⁷ Jung used Mandalas to combat stress and anxiety by getting anxious patients to 'colour in' the Mandalas intricate geometric patterns.

⁸ *The Color Run* is an American brand, which explains the American spelling 'color' with each reference to *The Color Run* in this chapter

⁹ Taken from the fact section of *The Color Run* UK webpage, accessible here: <http://thecolorrun.co.uk/> [Accessed 5th February 2017]

¹⁰ Goethe, J.W. (1970). [1810] *Theory of Colours*. trans C.L Eastlake. Cambridge, MA.

¹¹ Batchelor, D. (2000). *Chromophobia*. London: Reaktion Books. p. 22.

Chromophobia can be identified in the writings of Goethe himself. In *Theory of Colours*, when discussing ‘Pathological Colours’, Goethe remarks in a primitivist, orientalist language:

Savage nations, uneducated people, and children have a great predilection for vivid colours; that animals are excited to rage by certain colours; that people of refinement avoid vivid colours in their dress and the objects that are about them, and seem inclined to banish them altogether from their presence.¹²

Colour shifts between states of attraction and repulsion that can be traced through a history spanning architecture, health, culture and the emotions. However, despite cultural geography’s interest in not only these areas, but also the relationship between the body and space, cultural practices and the materiality of the urban environment, geographers have yet to critically engage with colour. Thinking geographically about colour allows a deeper understanding of colour through the lenses of practice, emotion, performance and the body. Furthermore, a geographical engagement with knowledge can reveal the discursive constructions of colour’s perceived ability to repair. Overall, placing geography at the centre of this research provides a unique perspective that attends to the “patterns and interactions of human culture, both material and non-material in relation to the natural environment and human organisation of space”, and how these formations are performed and produced.¹³

Research questions

As Ricky Burdett and Adam Kaasa wrote in *Urbanisms of Color*, “color is a ubiquitous part of any city, creating and shaping urban form... not only does color give meaning to cities, but cities give meaning to color.”¹⁴ Even places considered colourless are often imagined as grey. London, a cosmopolitan city undergoing significant and rapid urban change, from colourful big-ticket regeneration programmes splintering the city skyline, to smaller scale community and ludic initiatives, forms the distinctive empirical context of this research.

¹² Goethe, J.W. (1970) *Theory of Colours*. trans C.L Eastlake. Cambridge, MA. p. 55.

¹³ Cosgrove, D. (2000). Cultural Geography. in Johnston, R.J. Gregory, D. Pratt, G. and Watts, M. (eds) *The dictionary of human geography*. 4th edition. Oxford: Blackwell. p. 134.

¹⁴ Burdett, R. and Kaasa, A. (2011) Color as an urban discourse. In Doherty, G. (ed) *Urbanisms of Color*. Harvard University Press. Cambridge, MA.

The city, as a defining feature of contemporary human experience and sociality provides a rich site to explore the ambivalence of the city as both a site of hope, order and harmony, and the disrepair presented in threats of political and cultural dislocation, alienation and misanthropy.¹⁵ Navigating between the two poles of the progressive, classical interpretations of the hopeful “polis” and insecurity present in urbanity is a useful field in which to study cultures of repair, raising the wider question: what exactly needs repairing, and why? This thesis considers repair with specific attention to the role colour and repair has in urban debate. Exploring the complicated relationship between colour, space and the body, this research examines a range of practices in urban culture and considers it across a range of different scales. This research is grounded in an ethnographic, qualitative approach that examines colour from the scale of the city, the neighbourhood and the body. Contributing to geographic scholarship on materiality, embodiment and emotion, and producing new research on the study of colour, this thesis is guided by three main research questions. The first set of questions concerns the geographies of knowledge. How do practitioners use colour in architectural design? On what basis is colour used, and what claims, if any, are made when using colour? What knowledges are translated into architectural practice? How do practitioners frame repair through attempts to interweave intensities, identities and capacities into space? What are the discourses circulating around scales of repair? In re-imagining space through colour, how are specific practical and material configurations perceived to generate new experiences and engagements? In order to examine these questions, I undertake a discourse analysis of a variety of texts, case studies, documents and practitioners’ own accounts through a range of semi-structured interviews with architects, artists and colour consultants.

The second set of questions concerns the community scale of colouring initiatives. How is the idea of repair mobilised in community colour projects? How are spaces understood as in need of colour or change? Who exactly is involved in these schemes? How does this work feel? What is colour perceived to do? Answering this set of questions requires a more in-depth engagement with community colouring practices. In addition to semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders involved in painting initiatives, in responding to the second research question, I examine the

¹⁵ Thrift, N. (2005) But malice afterthought: Cities and the history of hatred. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 30(2). pp. 133-150.

Dulux *Let's Colour* project in the UK, questioning the way the scheme reproduces the grey imaginary. Finally, exploring the making of a community colour initiative, I conduct a participatory ethnography with an artist in Barking, London.

The third set of questions explore the relationship between colour, the body and emotion. How are emotional responses to colour orchestrated and experienced? Which emotions dominate in the literature around new ludic colour experiences, such as colour runs? How is repair performed? Investigating the proliferation of colour events demands a far deeper participatory engagement and observation of specific projects. Conducting semi-structured interviews with event organisers behind three, colour based ludic events, *The Color Run*, *Run or Dye* and the *Festival of Colours*, this research question involves three ethnographies; one as a volunteer 'Colour Thrower' responsible for 'administering' happiness at *The Color Run*; autoethnographic research taking part in the race, *Run or Dye*, and participant observation at the Holi *Festival of Colours* in London. Approaching these ethnographies with an attention to the corporeal, I examine how emotion is produced, mobilised and transferred between bodies, and the complex, embodied labour at its core.

Thesis outline

This thesis is arranged into five main chapters. Chapter 1 outlines the theoretical positions that inform the conceptual framework for this study. Negotiating geographical scholarship on the material, the urban and emotion, this chapter responds to the ranging knowledges informing this research. Towards the end of the chapter, it presents a theoretical discussion around the key conceptual framework, repair, and how it has been used critically in urban, cultural, social and psychological literatures. Chapter 2 introduces the methodology underpinning the research. Drawing on geographical research methods and an ethnographic approach, this chapter explains the methods undertaken for this thesis, providing a reflective account of the research process.

The first empirical chapter begins with the city. Using four 'reparative' devices to explore colour and urban regeneration: re-stitching, transfusion, filling gaps and fixing, Chapter 3 examines how colour is negotiated, expected and perceived to

perform repair amongst practitioners. Describing the complex process involved in choosing the colour of a building, this chapter brings in the expert knowledge of a particular practitioner – the colour consultant – in achieving design goals. In order to attend to the significant health theme in this thesis, colour and design is examined in the hospital as a site for the repair of bodies. Exposing tensions around the judicious use of colour for these sensitive healing spaces, the hospital is a particularly vivid example of colour and repair. This chapter reveals the vitalist discourses embedded in practitioners’ narratives and the shifting, unstable knowledges around colour use, exposing an underlying chromophobia in their practice.

The second empirical chapter begins with the neighbourhood. Drawing on the proliferation of community schemes intent on colouring the run down façades of buildings in deprived neighbourhoods, the chapter explores the social and urban repairs performed by colour in the 2014 Dulux *Let’s Colour* project; a scheme that donates paint to local communities to revitalise grey spaces. In this chapter, I examine the politics of nominated spaces ‘in need’ of colour and draw on my participation in an active community painting initiative, colouring a disused bingo hall in Barking, London. Framed within the politics of localism and the Big Society, this chapter reveals how colour is a valuable regeneration alternative that re-materialises both community and space. It argues that initiatives like *Let’s Colour* reproduce a grey imaginary and delivers a notion of ‘social legacy’ which is enacted through practices of social and material repair.

The final empirical chapter hones in closer to explore the complex relationship between colour, the body and emotion. Investigating the proliferation of new ludic colour experiences, I explore the complexity of how emotional responses to colour are orchestrated and experienced through three ethnographic, observational and participatory endeavours; *The Color Run, Run or Dye* and the *Festival of Colours*. Arguing that emotion is enabled through a series of contingent performances, embodied labour and contagion, this chapter reveals the ways happiness, healthiness and fun manifest in these popular experiences. Finally, in my conclusions, I bring together and consolidate my findings to expose how repair could be used as a device with which to understand colour and indicate avenues for further research. My reflections on the practices and performances of colour aims to contribute to debates around the capacities of matter, animates the work colour does over bodies and space and reveals how the contingent and affective chromatic materiality of our environment

emerges in the claims, knowledge production and practices of colour in urban culture, architecture and health.

Chapter 1

Literature review

Colour is a fundamental part of our experience of the world around us. In recent years, colour has received renewed interdisciplinary attention from historians, anthropologists, scientists, psychologists and sociologists. However, little attention has been paid to colour in the geographical imagination, despite geography's increased interest in the site, the body, materiality and practice, and colour's entanglements with geographies of art, emotion and health.

The review is structured in six parts. The first two opening sections introduce two different tensions around colour that play a critical role in this thesis. In the first, I identify a deeply rooted philosophical tension between science and emotion, and between mathematics and the eye. This section begins with influential colour theories, artistic practice and architectural history. Drawing on key philosophical texts, this section positions a central theme in the thesis: the primitivist, chromophobic association with colour and its pathology. The second tension concerns the

relationship between colour, practice and knowledge. In this section, I introduce some of the claims that are made about colour and the emotions attending to the case of health and wellbeing. The third section engages the study of colour with material geography, demonstrating how vital materialism is a useful frame with which to view the ‘life’ of material colour. In the fourth section, I explore the role of the emotions in geography and the multiple forces at play in urban and social life. The fifth section critiques the role of regeneration and colour in the production of space, moving from larger scale regeneration practices to smaller, tactical urbanism strategies. Finally, this review concludes with an in depth focus on repair. Following on from the cognate geographical and urban work in conversation with this thesis, this literature review maps the conceptual framework guiding this thesis on colour and repair.

Tension I: Colour theory

Since the Renaissance *paragone* between *colore* (colour) and *disegno* (drawing), colour has been the subject of intense theoretical debate. The development of colour theory has been heavily influenced by two well-known scholars from drastically opposing theoretical fields: the physicist Isaac Newton and the poet, author and philosopher, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. In 1666, Isaac Newton passed white light through a prism and watched it emerge into a rainbow. The experiment demonstrated that light is made of seven colours, which he arranged on a scale of their respective wavelengths; violet with the shortest, to the longest, red. For the first scientific experiment on the visible spectrum, it was, for many, oddly unscientific. The seven colours in the visible spectrum were arranged to represent the notes of the Dorian musical scale (starting with D, with no sharps or flats). Newton’s colour-music analogy represented the recurrence of octaves, and even introduced the colours orange and indigo at points in the wheel where ‘half steps’ occur between E and F (orange) and B and C (indigo). Published in 1704, Newton’s *Optiks* was the crucial step in understanding colour.

However, light and paint are two very different materials. When all colours are brought together in light, you create white; whereas when all colours are brought together in paint, you create black. Capturing this interplay between light and dark, the German thinker Goethe published his own colour theories in 1810. Unconvinced by Newton’s mathematics and more concerned with sensation and the eye, Goethe’s

Theory of Colors was an influential treatise on the nature and psychology of colours.¹⁶ Goethe's theory connected colour to the realm of emotion, a theory derived from the poet's intuition rather than scientific method. In Goethe's colour psychology, it is clear in many of his assertions that bright colours are inextricably linked to ideas of impurity or sully. In his account of yellow, Goethe explains that although "in its highest purity it always carries with it the nature of brightness... it is, on the other hand, extremely liable to contamination and produces a very disagreeable effect if it is sullied... thus, the colour of sulphur, which inclines to green, has something unpleasant to it."¹⁷ Blue on the other hand is "powerful, but... on the negative side... rooms which are hung with pure blue, appear in some degrees larger, but at the same time empty and cold."¹⁸ In Goethe's examination, he divided colour into 'plus' and 'minus' colours according to their emotional make up. As an example, yellow and yellow-red were considered 'plus' colours as, for Goethe, they were 'life-enhancing'. On the other hand, blues, purples and blue-greens were 'minus' because they evoked anxiety. The powerful emotional force that Goethe believed colour possessed was particularly influential in art. In 1843, Joseph Turner painted *Light and Colour (Goethe's Theory) - the Morning after the Deluge - Moses writing the Book of Genesis* using Goethe's 'plus' colours in an attempt to evoke the reawakening suggested in the paintings' title.

Goethe's influences were rather famously drawn on by founders of the Bauhaus school. Opening shortly after the First World War in 1911, the Bauhaus is an iconic design school in Germany, based in Weimar; Goethe's hometown. One of the key tenets of the Bauhaus philosophy is utopianism and harmony. Lead by architect Walter Gropius, and artists Johannes Itten, Josef Albers, Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky, the Bauhaus' theory and philosophy were grounded in Goethe's mysticism and appreciation of colour psychology and our relationship with emotion. Though it was shut down by the Nazi regime in 1933, the Bauhaus' teachings continue to be valuable today, from the iron-grid urban design of New York City to the ubiquitous cubic Ikea KALLAX storage units popular in modern living rooms.

Both Newton and Goethe arranged their arguments in practical 'colour wheels' that were read, applied, and reworked over the years by artists and philosophers for hundreds of years. However, their theories illustrate tensions in scientific method,

¹⁶ Goethe, J.W. (1810) *Theory of Colors*. Reprint 1970. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

¹⁷ Ibid: 308.

¹⁸ Ibid: 311.

between the phenomenological and the positivist, between art and science. Colour knowledge crosses disciplinary boundaries and is fuelled by intense, inextinguishable debate from multiple epistemological positions. In many ways, the lenses through which we view colour are more complex than a reductionist separation of ‘colour science’ and ‘artistic colour’. As Newton demonstrated, his visible light experiments are an example of a physics of colour. A biologist, however, may consider colour in terms of its evolutionary, survival power. For chemists, colour moves away from the natural uses of colour in the New World, such as the creation of red from tiny cochineal beetles, to the synthetic chemical revolution of colour. In that sense, not only could a geographer see colour rather differently from other social scientists, but also differently if they were a physical geographer, a health geographer and a cultural geographer. In this research, as a geographer, I bring to the fore these tensions, and create connective threads with the complimentary knowledges to compose geographical score on colour.

The tensions implicit in Renaissance *paragone* at the start of the section not only reveal the longstanding prioritisation of form over colour, but the politics of *disengo* and *colore*. *Disengo* stood for purity and intellect, whilst *colore* was considered vulgar and effeminate. In addition, Goethe’s *Theory of Colors* included a crucial distinction between what he termed *physiological* colour and *pathological* colour; the latter he defined as a “morbid phenomena”.¹⁹ David Batchelor’s 2000 book *Chromophobia* is a significant body of work that developed on the pathological notion of colour and creates another tension. For David Batchelor, colour represents:

[the] disobedient, the eccentric, the irregular and the subversive...to be called colourful is to be flattered and insulted at the same time. To be colourful is to be distinctive and equally, to be dismissed...colour is other.²⁰

The wariness around the use of colour in art and architecture is something Batchelor explores in great depth in *Chromophobia*.²¹ Batchelor argues that this “loathing of colour, this fear of corruption through colour needs a name: chromophobia.”²² This phobic attribution likens colour to a disease, a medical condition or a psychological

¹⁹ Goethe, J.W. and Eastlake, C.L. (1967) *Theory of Colors*. London: Frank Cass. p. 45.

²⁰ Batchelor, D. (2000) *Chromophobia*. London: Reaktion Book. pp. 66-67.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid: 22.

condition. Batchelor traces the phobia of colour from the apartheid of colour in ancient Greece, where Aristotle argued that the “repository of thought in art is line, the rest is ornament.”²³ The tension between colour as superficial and linearity as meaningful has permeated art history since these classical interpretations. Batchelor extends his thesis on chromophobia by tracing it back to conceptualisations of colour and the primitive:

Colour is made out to be the property of some ‘foreign’ body – usually the feminine, the oriental, the primitive, the infantile, the vulgar, the pathological. In the second, colour is relegated to the realm of the superficial, the supplementary, the inessential or the cosmetic. In one, colour is regarded as alien and therefore dangerous; and in the other, it is perceived merely as a secondary quality of experience, and thus unworthy of serious consideration. Colour is dangerous, or trivial, or both.²⁴

In Western culture, the “cosmetic” is a primary lens through which colour is viewed and consistently devalued. Batchelor argues that:

If the cosmetic is essentially anything, it is essentially visible... essentially visible, essentially superficial and thinner than the skin onto which it is applied. Cosmetics adorn, embellish, supplement.²⁵

This pejorative cosmetic construction of colour can be linked to architectural theory on the decoration of buildings. The preference for the white volume over the decorated, coloured surface can be traced all the way back to Plato’s Ideal, and has since provoked interest in architectural studies on the efficacy of white in design. Architect Mark Wigley discussed the ‘fashioning’ of modern architecture through an analysis of whiteness.²⁶ Drawing attention to the fashion and colour metaphors apparent in the polemical statements of modernist architects, Wigley identified the tendency to define architecture through clothes. Here, whiteness symbolised the new outfit that would clad the “modern, athletic body” in order for white walls to become the ‘default setting’ for avant-garde architecture even where colour was employed.²⁷

²³ Ibid: 29.

²⁴ Ibid: 22-23.

²⁵ Ibid: 52.

²⁶ Wigley, M. (2001) *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture*, Boston: MIT Press.

²⁷ Ibid: 31

Wigley asserts that written descriptions and cheap photographic reproductions have persuaded generations of students of modern architecture that the key colour was white. To explain how the modern movement came to be associated with whiteness, Wigley teases out the many connotations of white through sexuality. Wigley argued that colour was sexual while white was considered intellectual. Colours changed whereas white remained permanent. White was hygienic. Architecture was strong and masculine; fashion was frivolous and feminine. The irony, then, of modernist architecture's insistence of white, is that it is no more than veneer – 'a designer dress'. The Latin word, *colorem*, is in fact related to *celare* – to hide or conceal. By attempting to create a new tradition and order, Modernists were, in essence, creating a new fashion, eventually becoming a tool of capitalist expression.

Taking this discussion of Western colour as phobic, and whiteness as cleanliness and purity, questions how interventionist strategies like those in Tirana are used in efforts for urban repair and improvement. It questions the way one can think of colours, either relationally, producing dominant causes and effects, culturally determinist, or as exoticised, appropriated and primitive. These theories and reflections query how colour is practiced in urban space today and the knowledges that inform these practices. The next section discusses some of the key tensions around colour and practice, highlighting ambiguities and contestations that have informed this research.

Tension II: Colour and practice

The popular press and the design community have promoted the oversimplification of the psychological responses to color. Many authors of guidelines tend to make sweeping statements that support myths or personal beliefs. Likewise, most color guidelines for healthcare design are nothing more than affective value judgments whose direct applicability to the architecture and interior design of healthcare settings seems oddly inconclusive and nonspecific...the study of color in healthcare settings is challenging because it occurs in the context of meaningful settings and situations. Our judgement of color in certain settings is a result of multiple layers of experience.²⁸

²⁸Tofle, R.B, Schwartz, B., Yoon, S. & Max-Royale, A. (2003) *Color in Healthcare Environments - A Research Report*, Coalition for Health Environments Research, p. 5.

Regrettably, much of the knowledge about the use of colour in healthcare environments come from guidelines that are based on highly biased observations and pseudo-scientific assertions... we should not base our color selections on market trends or personal beliefs.²⁹

The claims made that implementing colour into drab urban spaces will create various scales of improvement lacks critical evaluation. Whilst no scholarship directly addresses the range of claims in urban discourse, a similar argument is made around public art, where Hall and Robertson argue that there is no sound conceptual apparatus or paradigm to evaluate the claims made by these urban, public practices.³⁰ There is a great challenge in the advocacy of the claims made by the implementation of colourful paints onto the surface of buildings in need of (re)production or regeneration in urban space. Firstly, it is difficult to place the study of colour within a particular discipline, sharing criticism between the arts, neuroscience, aesthetics or chromotherapy. Alexander argues that much of the theory development regarding the effects on society of cultural products, which could be extended to urban colouring projects, ignores the fact that cultural products are consumed by ‘publics’³¹. I argue that this flaw could contribute to the essentialisation of colours’ affect and the production of pre-discursive expectations of how colours act on human subjects and their surrounding environments. With the lack of research accounting for the use of colour in urban spaces for similar means, in order to illustrate this flaw I will turn to the example of colour in healthcare environments in order to explore further the transactions that take place between colour, the environment, and human response.

While a longstanding tradition in the geographical study of health care focuses on how resources are distributed and the consequences³², an emerging focus of

²⁹ Ibid: 4.

³⁰ Hall, T. (2002) *Community Arts, Urban Regeneration and Community Development: A Review of Evidence*, Cheltenham.

Hall, T. (2003a) Art and urban change. Public art in urban regeneration. In A. Blunt et al., eds. *Cultural Geography in Practice*. London: Arnold, pp. 221–234.

Hall, T. (2003b) Opening up public art’s spaces: art, regeneration and audience. In M. Miles, ed. *Cultures and Settlements: Advances in Art and Urban Futures*. Bristol: Intellect, pp. 49–57.

³¹ Alexander, V., (2003) *Sociology of the Arts. Exploring Fine and Popular Forms*, Oxford: Blackwell.

³²Eyles, J. (1990) How significant are the spatial configurations of health care systems? *Social Science and Medicine*, 30(1), pp. 157–164.

Joseph, A.E. & Phillips, D.R. (1984) *Accessibility and Utilization: Geographical Perspectives on Health Care Delivery*, London: SAGE.

Mohan, J. (1998) Explaining geography of health care: a critique. *Health & Place*, 4(2), pp. 113–124.

research during the last fifteen years has been on the *nature* of health care setting. Many studies have engaged with the broad medical, political, corporate and cultural movements that have transformed these settings and spaces over time.³³ A fundamental issue in research has been how the physical form of health care institutions sends messages which affect how they are felt and regarded (often as austere, uncaring and frightening).³⁴ While acknowledging the considerable challenges involved in changing these perceptions, through design and manipulation, it has been argued that clinical settings can be made more therapeutic in a holistic sense.³⁵ Beyond this concern for architecture and design there has been a sustained interest in research on what powerful interests health care settings should represent and become, and how these visions have been made a reality.³⁶

Research in environmental psychology is a significant body of work that has sought to demonstrate how different environmental stimuli can affect both mood³⁷ and behaviour.³⁸ Since the 1960s, environmental psychology has started to overlap between the realms of architecture and psychology.³⁹ Dr Peter Smith's fascination with cerebral urbanism in his essay *The Dialectics of Colour* argued that "more than ever, there is a need for environmental presentations which enable the neocortex and limbic system to

Powell, M. (1995) On the outside looking in: medical geography, medical geographers and access to health care. *Health & Place*, 3(2), pp. 73–89.

³³ Andrews, G.J. & Evans, J. (2008) Understanding the reproduction of health care: towards geographies in health care work. *Progress in Human Geography*, 32(6), pp. 759–780.

³⁴ Kearns, R.A. & Barnett, R., (1997) Consumerist ideology and the symbolic landscapes of private medicine. *Health & Place*, 3(3), pp. 171–180.

³⁵ Curtis, S., Gesler, W., Fabian, K., Francis, S. and Priebe, S. (2007) Therapeutic landscapes in hospital design: a qualitative assessment by staff and service users of the design of a new mental health inpatient unit. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 25, pp. 591–610.

Evans, J.D., Crooks, V.A. & Kingsbury, P.T. (2009) Theoretical injections: on the therapeutic aesthetics of medical spaces. *Social Science and Medicine*, 69(5), pp. 716–721.

Gesler, W., Belt, M. Curtis, S., Hubbard, P. and Francis, S. (2004) Therapy by design: evaluating the UK hospital building program. *Health & Place*, 10(2), pp. 117–28.

³⁶ Andrews, G.J. (2011) "I had to go to the hospital and it was freaking me out": needle phobic encounter space. *Health & Place*, 17(4), pp. 875–84.

³⁷ Knez, I., (2001) Effects of colour of light on nonvisual psychological processes. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 21, pp. 201–208.

Leather, P., Beale, D., Santos, A., Watts, J and Lee, L. (2003) Outcomes of environmental appraisal of different hospital waiting areas. *Environment and Behaviour*, 35, pp. 842–869.

³⁸ Gifford, R. (1988) Light, decor, arousal, comfort, and communication. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 8, pp. 177–189.

Mattila, A.S. & Wirtz, J. (2001) Congruency of scent and music as a driver of in-store evaluations and behaviour. *Journal of Retailing*, 77, pp. 273–289.

³⁹ Altman, I. & Wohlwill, J. (1977) *Human Behavior and Environment*, New York: Plenum.

Canter, D., (1974) *Psychology for Architects*, London: Applied Science Publishers.

experience creative synthesis...colour in the environment has a crucial role to play in keeping alive the cerebral interactive rhythms by nourishing the need for the right side [of the brain] and by keeping active the dialectic routes between the centres of reason and emotion.”⁴⁰ The use of colour’s affects for positive means is not a new concept; Babbitt’s work on chromotherapy in the late 1800s instigated a range of work on the use of colour in the rehabilitation of patients suffering ailments including diabetes, tuberculosis, and more recently to the light therapy and Spectro-Chrome lamps in the mitigation of other illnesses such as SADS. However, in Schweitzer, Gilpin and Frampton’s study on healing spaces, they conclude that “while a great deal of attention has paid over time to the design and creation of healing environments, much of the data informing these efforts are anecdotal or under-researched.”⁴¹

Colour as promoting health and changes of emotional state involves the use of a variety of modalities, from the exposure of coloured lights to the visualisations of colours, or even the full embodiment of colour through eating of certain coloured foods. The use of colour as a mediator and balancing act in human bodies stretches back to ancient Egypt and the temple of Heliopolis where patients were treated in rooms designed to separate the sun’s rays into various colours of the spectrum. Mahnke’s *Colour, Environment and Human Response* details architectural design goals and guidelines for colour application.⁴² It begins with an interesting epigraph from two architectural practitioners:

On the grounds of the knowledge and scientific findings regarding the effects of color, its influence on the human organism, on psychosomatic well-being, and color’s significance for the quality of an appearance and an appearance thereof, it cannot be disregarded that color, as an essential element in design, is often thoughtlessly misused.⁴³

The translation of colour and design’s healthy possibilities has seen an increased interest in how spaces can be engineered to heal, such as in hospital design. Although much research supports the idea that the architecture of psychiatric hospitals can

⁴⁰ Smith, D. (1976) *The Dialectics of Colour*. Porter, T. & Mikellides, B. (Eds.) *Colour for Architecture*, London, Studio Vista, p. 21.

⁴¹ Schweitzer, M., Gilpin, L. & Frampton, S., (2004) Healing spaces: elements of environmental design that make an impact on health. *Journal of alternative and complementary medicine*, 10(1), p. 83.

⁴² Mahnke, F. (1996) *Color, Environment, and Human Response*, New York: Routledge.

⁴³ Rodeck, B. and Meerwein, G. In Mahnke, F.H. (1996) *Color, Environment, and Human Response*, New York: Routledge, p. xi.

create healing spaces,⁴⁴ empirical evidence regarding the effects of environmental colouring is still weak.⁴⁵ Previous research suggests a link between colours and emotions, with warm colours associated with aroused feelings and cool colours with calming ones, for instance.⁴⁶ Kaya and Epps asked participants to indicate their emotional responses to different colours and confirmed positive effects for the colour green. Wexner's study preferred to use coloured cards to ask participants to connect their feelings with colours. More recently, collaborations between architects and health professionals have aimed to create atmospheres and environments conducive to healing, rehabilitation and life. Colour's relationship to mood in these spaces is highlighted in Schweitzer et al.'s paper *Healing Spaces*.⁴⁷ The use of coloured light as a treatment modality, or 'esogetic colourpuncture' is a rapidly growing area of experimentation for many acupuncturists for the treatment of a wide range of illnesses. Similarly, ocular light therapy, the process of projecting light through coloured filters into the eyes, is claimed to "enhance brain activity, increase brain activity and open up neural pathways...[and] improve intellectual capacity as well as emotional and physical well-being."⁴⁸ However, even in these experiments, results are not consistent and sometimes even contradictory; further still, the focus on experimenting within indoor settings prevails, despite the sheer density of people now living in urban settings that may also be affected by the colour-responses that these studies prophesise.

⁴⁴ Dijkstra, K., Pieterse, M.E. & Pruyn, A.T.H. (2008) Individual differences in reactions towards color in simulated healthcare environments: The role of stimulus screening ability. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 28(3), pp. 268–277.

Ulrich, R.S., Zimring, C., Quan, X., Joseph, A. and Choudary, R. (2004) *The role of the physical environment in the hospital of the 21st century: A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity*, Martinez, CA: The Center for Health Design.

⁴⁵ Dijkstra, K., Pieterse, M.E. & Pruyn, A.T.H., (2008) Individual differences in reactions towards color in simulated healthcare environments: The role of stimulus screening ability. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 28(3), pp. 268–277.

⁴⁶ Kaya, N. & Epps, H. (2004) Relationship between color and emotion: A study of college students. *College Student Journal*, 38, pp. 396–405.

Valdez, P. & Mehrabian, A. (1994) Effects of color on emotions. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 123, pp. 394–409.

Wexner, L.B. (1954) The degree to which colors (hues) are associated with moodtones. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 38, pp. 432–435.

⁴⁷ Schweitzer, M., Gilpin, L. & Frampton, S. (2004) Healing spaces: elements of environmental design that make an impact on health. *Journal of alternative and complementary medicine*, 10(1), pp. 71–83.

⁴⁸ Ibid: 75.

Colour Matters

The most burning issue with art today: is it possible to generate relationships with the world, in a practical field of art-history traditionally earmarked for their ‘representation’?⁴⁹

As I have demonstrated in this chapter, the vision of colour from the perspective of healthy environments tend to privilege the representational quality of colour; considered as embodying particular personalities that can be productively used for particular means. The language Edi Rama uses to describe the colouring of his city does not subscribe to the more ‘representational’ politics of colour, claiming in *Dammi I Colori* “...it is not a matter of what colour you may want the balcony painted; it is not a matter of what colour you may want this or that building, because that would mean trying to add up all the golden mean, which would be grey.” It is clear that there are contesting (meta)narratives around how we understand colour. The tendency to see only the representational qualities of colour, as communicative semiotics, denies the agency of coloured things and the expressive potentials within them. Emergent studies in anthropology have indicated that in order to help decipher a social science of colour, more attention to matter and materiality is necessary. As Young argues, “colours cannot be a projected representation of something else...created inside the human mind from a wavelength of light and projected back into the world. To split humans from their material world and from colour would be a double purification”⁵⁰ or, to borrow Jacques Rancière’s phrase, a “partition of the sensible”⁵¹ In *Principles of Philosophy*, Descartes states, “it is clear then that when we say we perceive colours in objects, it is really just the same as saying that we perceived in objects something as to whose nature we are ignorant but which produces in us a very clear and vivid sensation, what we call the sensation of colour.”⁵² These elitivist approaches, while productive in many ways, *de-materialises* colour, making them stand for something beyond their surface presence. Unlike form, colour in conventional western terms is constructed as an ambiguous and subjective component of the world. In order to

⁴⁹ Bourriaud, N. (2002) *Relational Aesthetics*, Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, p. 9.

⁵⁰ Young, D. (2011) Mutable things : colours as material practice in the northwest of South Australia. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 17, p. 372.

⁵¹ Rancière, J. (2004) *The Politics of Aesthetics*. New York: Continuum.

⁵² Descartes, R. (1644) *Principles of Philosophy*. Reprinted in 1988. Translated by J. Veitch. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing.

quantify colour as a ‘stimulus’, cognitive science and psychology has calibrated colours as measurable wavelengths of light, yet in other arenas colours are considered as extravagantly expressive and intuitive.

Since Jackson’s call to ‘re-materialise’ cultural geography,⁵³ there has been an increase in the numbers of scholars turning towards materiality, matter and their transformative states⁵⁴ reflecting a politics of attending to the material.⁵⁵ The technicolour of Tirana and other colour interventions illustrate the conflation and interdependency of both visual and material economies. However, prioritising colour as decoration, as ornament or as aesthetic without evaluating the interconnectivity and co-constitution of colour and its geographies puts colour at risk of falling foul of ‘surface geographies’; where a political engagement with the concept of the material is absent.⁵⁶ For Tolia-Kelly, surface geographies locate themselves “at the outer edge, the surface film, rather than engage with the questions of politics or what is at stake materially.”⁵⁷ Surface geographies risk delivering a visual collage of what is observed rather than considered through theories of the material, politics, affect or effect. Hetherington’s engagement with the material acknowledges that they are *live*, active, agentic and powerful.⁵⁸ In tracing the steps required to ‘do’ materiality, Hetherington moves *beyond* the surface of matter, to engage with the politics, grammars and productive power of materials that are in place shaping place and effectively making a *difference* to place and the place of each other. A criticism of the vitalist turn in geography is its need to be cautious not to tirelessly reiterate that the world is not

⁵³ Jackson, P. (2000) Rematerializing social and cultural geography. *Social and Cultural Geography*, 1, pp. 9–14.

⁵⁴ Cook, I. & Tolia-Kelly, D.P. (2010) Material geographies. In D. Hicks & B. Mary, (eds). *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gregson, N., Watkins, H. & Calestani, M., (2010) Inextinguishable fires: Demolition and the vital materialisms of asbestos. *Environment and Planning A*, 42(5), pp. 1065–1083.

Hicks, D. & Beaudry, M. (2010) *Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jayne, M., Valentine, G. & Holloway, S.L. (2010) Emotional, embodied and affective geographies of alcohol, drinking and drunkenness. *Environment and Planning A*, 35(3), pp. 449–462.

⁵⁵ Anderson, B. & Tolia-Kelly, D.P. (2004) Matter(s) in social and cultural geography. *Geoforum*, 35(6), pp. 669–674; Clark, N., Massey, D. & Sarre, P. (2008) *Material Geographies: A World in the Making*, London: Sage; Crang, M. & Tolia-Kelly, D.P. (2010) Nation, race and affect: Senses and sensibilities at National Heritage sites. *Environment and Planning A*, 42(10), pp. 2315–2331; Miller, D. (ed) (1998) *Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter*, Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.

⁵⁶ Tolia-Kelly, D.P. (2012) The geographies of cultural geography III: Material geographies, vibrant matters and risking surface geographies. *Progress in Human Geography*, 37(1), pp. 153–160.

⁵⁷ Ibid: 154.

⁵⁸ Hetherington, K. (2003) Spatial Textures: Place, Touch and Praesentia. *Environment and Planning A*, 35, p. 38.

governed by mechanistic causality,⁵⁹ as is often the case with the reading of colour and emotions. Bennett offers something of a response to this. Attending to vibrant matter may lead us to engage with the world differently, aware that our existence is conditioned and constituted through a lively materiality that exceeds us.⁶⁰ The modifiers that Bennett attaches to matter – vital, energetic, lively, quivering, vibrating, evanescent, efflorescent – are important in the discussion of the ways colour *brings life* to places. Bennett’s description of matter speaks of an eventful, lively world, one which seemingly interrupts the out-dated, linear causality of the colour-emotion-response network, and one that is firmly rooted in the experiential and felt relationships between humans and their surrounding environment.

The vitality and life of colour is at risk of becoming framed; a negation of networked meanings and values situated in a political world with political grammar. Urban environments are more and more being designed in order to be distinctive, vibrant and beautiful, thus creating memorable sensory experiences for the people that pass through them.⁶¹ Experience is conceptualised in both academic and policy circles as a more or less direct effect of the built environment. The city itself provides an interesting site, confronting us with some fundamental facts of human existence. Western urban policy has been substantially dominated in recent years by the implementation and impact of urban design and regeneration strategies.⁶² In addition to this, there is an implicit assumption that such design directly affects people’s experience of place – “good design can help create lively places with distinctive character...places that inspire because of the imagination and sensitivity of their designers.”⁶³ Equally importantly is the assumption that these kinds of transformations also profoundly alter the experience of urban space.⁶⁴ Alexander later argues draws up

⁵⁹ See Braun, B. (2008) Environmental issues: Inventive life. *Progress in Human Geography*. 32, pp. 667–679.

⁶⁰ Bennett, J. (2010) *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke University.

⁶¹ Thrift, N. (2004) Intensities of feeling. *Geografiska Annaler*. 86(B), pp. 57–72; Allen, J. (2006) Ambient power: Berlin’s Potsdamer Platz and the seductive logic of public spaces. *Urban Studies*. 43, pp. 441–455; Klingman, A. (2007) *Brandscapes: Architecture in the Experience Economy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press; Lonsway, B. (2009) *Making Leisure Work: Architecture and the Experience Economy*. London: Routledge.

⁶² Degen, M.M. and Rose, G. (2012) The Sensory Experiencing of Urban Design: The Role of Walking and Perceptual Memory. *Urban Studies*. 49(15), pp. 3271–3287.

⁶³ DETR/CABE (2000) *By Design: Urban Design and the Planning System: Towards Better Practice*. London: DETR. p. 8.

⁶⁴ Lefebvre, H. (1991) *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell; Hall, T. and Hubbard, P. (1998) *The Entrepreneurial City*. Chichester: Wiley; Degen, M. (2008) *Sensing Cities: Regenerating Public Life in Barcelona and Manchester*. London: Routledge; Brenner, N. and Theodore, N. (2002) *Spaces of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Blackwell; Cronin, A. and Hetherington, K. (2008) *Consuming the Entrepreneurial City: Image, Memory, Spectacle*. London: Routledge.

an image of publics as passive and uncritical and cultural products as good and beneficial.⁶⁵ In a similar vein, Hall argues that the public's experience and its relation to the production of space lacks attentive evaluation,⁶⁶ following his critique of Lefebvre. Hall argues that the links between the signification, production and experience are poorly developed. To assist in the deconstruction of these increasingly essentialist views, Lees argues that in order to better understand the production of meaning, the experience of these practices are fundamental and in need of further research.⁶⁷ A significant amount of academic literature discusses the contribution public art makes to urban areas,⁶⁸ with significantly less considering colour for the same purpose. In their analysis of urban regeneration in Milton Keynes, Degen and Rose identified a few shortcomings in the investigations of urban experience and emotional engagements:⁶⁹

- The neglect to investigate the immediate, in-situ, *corporeal experience* of the multiple urban dwellers of these spaces on a day to day basis;
- How built environments engage their users;
- The diverse felt experiences that such environments might elicit.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Alexander, V. (2003) *Sociology of the Arts. Exploring Fine and Popular Forms*. Oxford: Blackwell.

⁶⁶ Hall, T. (2003b) Opening up public art's spaces: art, regeneration and audience. In: Miles, M. (ed.) (2003) *Cultures and Settlements: Advances in Art and Urban Futures*. Bristol: Intellect, pp. 49–57.

⁶⁷ See Lees, L. (2001) Towards a critical geography of architecture: the case of an Ersatz Colosseum. *Ecumene*, 8, pp. 51–86.

⁶⁸ Hall, T. (2003a) Art and urban change. Public art in urban regeneration. In Blunt, A. et al. (eds.) (2003) *Cultural Geography in Practice*. London: Arnold, pp. 221–234; Miles, M. (2003) *Cultures and Settlements: Advances in Art and Urban Futures*. Bristol: Intellect Press; Miles, M. (2007) Book review: Papastergiadis, N. (2006) Spatial aesthetics: art, place and the everyday. London: Rivers Oram Press. 240 p. 35; Moody, E. (1990) Introduction. in Forum, P. A. (ed.) (1990) *Public Art Report*. London: Public Art Forum, pp. 2–3; Policy Studies Institute. (1994) The Benefits of Public Art. *Cultural Trends*. 23, pp. 37–55; Roberts, M. and Marsh, C. (1995) For art's sake: public art, planning policies and the benefits for commercial property. *Planning Practice and Research*. 10, pp. 189–198; Selwood, S. (1995) *The Benefits of Public Art: The Polemics of Permanent Art in Public Places*. London: Policy Studies Institute; Sharp, J., Pollock, V. and Paddison, R. (2005) Just art for a just city: public art and social inclusion in urban regeneration. *Urban Studies*. 42(5/6), pp. 1001–1023.

⁶⁹ Degen, M. and Rose, G. (2012) The Sensory Experiencing of Urban Design: The Role of Walking and Perceptual Memory. *Urban Studies*. 49(15), pp. 3271–3287.

⁷⁰ Exceptions include Law, L. (2001) Home Cooking: Filipino Women and Geographies of the Senses in Hong Kong. *Ecumene*. 8, pp. 264–283; Law, L. (2005) Sensing the City: Urban Experiences. In: Cloke, P. et al. (eds.) *Introducing Human Geographies*. 2nd edn. London: Arnold; Adams, M. et al. (2007) The 24-hour City: Residents' Sensorial Experiences. *Senses and Society*. 2, pp. 201–216; Degen, M. (2008) *Sensing Cities: Regenerating Public Life in Barcelona and Manchester*. London: Routledge; Degen, M., DeSilvey, C. and Rose, G. (2009) Experiencing visualities in designed urban environments: learning from Milton Keynes. *Environment and Planning A*. 40, pp. 1901–1921.

Designing for better environments in the “lively commotion of the world”⁷¹ necessitates an understanding of human’s engagement and fluid relations between things. Discourses in the scientific study of colour remain overtly concerned with flat ontologies that privilege the network, the linear, or the causal. Reminiscent of the arguments against Latour’s Actor-Network Theory by Hetherington and Law,⁷² the body of work on colour and human response could be seen as “colonial in its pretensions to inclusion...creating a new grand-narrative around issues of relation and difference. The cost was the exclusion of ‘Otherness’ and its less certain and equally important spatiality”⁷³.

Jane Jacobs re-worked how we attend to the materialities of architecture,⁷⁴ attending to socio-technical and material imbrications in the geography of architectural forms. Strebel also argues for an ‘enlivening of architecture’,⁷⁵ something extended by Rose et al. who argue that ‘feelings are part of building events’.⁷⁶ In her study of a public library in Vancouver, Loretta Lees called for a ‘critical’ geography of architecture, with an attention to the daily practices and experiences of those who inhabit buildings:

Traditionally, architectural geography has been practiced by putting architectural symbols into their social (and especially historical) contexts to tease out their meaning. But if we are to concern ourselves with the inhabitation of architectural space as signification...we must [also] engage...actively with those...practices through which architecture is inhabited, its understandings cannot be produced through abstract and a priori theorising.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Whatmore, S. (2002) *Hybrid geographies*. London: Sage.

⁷² Hetherington, K. and Law, J. (2000) After Networks. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. 18, pp. 127-132.

⁷³ Ibid: 128.

⁷⁴ Jacobs, J.M. (2006) A geography of big things. *Cultural Geographies*. 13(1), pp. 1–27; Jacobs, J.M. and Merriman, P. (2011) Editorial: Practicing architectures. *Social and Cultural Geography*. 12(3), pp. 211–222; Jacobs, J.M., Cairns, S. and Strebel, I. (2012) Performing a high-rise view. In: Rose, G. and Tolia-Kelly, D. P. (eds.) (2012) *Visuality/Materiality: Images, Objects and Practices*. Farnham: Ashgate.

⁷⁵ Strebel, I. (2011) The living building: Towards a geography of maintenance work. *Social and Cultural Geography*. 12(3), pp. 243–262.

⁷⁶ Rose, G., Degen, M. and Masdas, B. (2010) More on “big things”: Building events and feelings. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 35(3), p. 337.

⁷⁷ Lees, L. (2001) Towards a critical geography of architecture: the case of an Ersatz Colosseum. *Ecumene*. 8, p. 56.

The development of colour tools in architecture and design, despite the proposed projects' likelihood of being placed within social space does not fully account for the 'other' logics or spaces of difference from which an urban cultural geographical study of colour could emerge. Instead, a discursive 'grand-narrative' around what colours can do, based on anecdotal evidence⁷⁸ seemingly shapes practitioners understanding of colours' emotional geographies. This in turn has the danger to reduce colour's emotional capacity into simple 'expectations', and forgetting the importance of *engaging* with coloured space.

Peter Kraftl's work on the geographies of the Hundertwasser-Haus⁷⁹ explores its multifarious constructions of extraordinariness and utopia through a methodological focus on urban engagement and experience. In *Living in an Artwork: The Extraordinary Geographies of the Hundertwasser-Haus, Vienna*⁸⁰ Kraftl explores the lived experience of the residents living in one of the most popular tourist attractions in the city. Kraftl examines how the characteristic properties of the house must collectively and actively operate in an everyday and practical sense in order to maintain its spectacular space. He argues that production of this extra-ordinariness is "a social and socialising condition which is shared between individuals."⁸¹ Post-structural architectural theorists such as Iain Borden, Barbera Penner and Jane Rendell,⁸² Leonie Sandercock⁸³ and Jeremy Till⁸⁴ have also called for a greater acknowledgement of the radical open-ness of architectural space to human inhabitation. Drawing inspiration from Lefebvre, they seek to emphasise the multiple, politicised roles played by human bodies in performing urban spaces and architectures.⁸⁵ In examining the production of extra-ordinariness and ordinariness within the Hundertwasser-Haus, Kraftl scrutinises how an individual housing block perpetuates itself, by examining with the residents, tourists and commentators who engage with the house. Over a period of four weeks,

⁷⁸ Tofle, R.B. (2003) Color in Healthcare Environments – A Research Report. Available from: http://www.healthdesign.org/sites/default/files/color_in_hc_enviro.pdf [Accessed 10 December 2016].

⁷⁹ Kraftl, P. (2009) Living in an artwork: the extraordinary geographies of the Hundertwasser-Haus, 1 Vienna. *Cultural Geographies*. 16(1), pp. 111–134.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid: 113.

⁸² Rendell, J., Penner, B. and Borden, I. (eds) (1999) *Gender Space and Architecture: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*. London: Routledge.

⁸³ Sandercock, L. (1998) *Towards Cosmopolis. Planning for Multicultural Cities*. Chichester: John Wiley.

⁸⁴ Till, J. (2009) *Architecture Depends*. London: MIT Press.

⁸⁵ See Borden, I., Kerr, J. Rendell, J. and Pivaro, A., (eds) (2001) *The Unknown City: Contesting Architecture and Social space*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Krafl spent time in a pedestrianised street opposite the house and in the main tourist ‘village’, and interviewed residents in the Hundertwasser-Haus pertaining to their lives at home. This approach is used to get at *how* extra-ordinariness *matters* to the people who experience it and produce it. As a result, Krafl’s paper calls for greater attention to the becoming-extra-ordinariness of places around the world. Although I would not go as far to argue that colour interventions are *extra-ordinary* in the sense that colouring practices *transform into* banality and everydayness, the extra-ordinariness of the Hundertwasser-Haus does share some similarities. For one, the production and reproduction of coloured cities such as Tirana conflates the ordinary living practices with the spectacular; ordinary, because people can go about their daily lives as usual, spectacular, because of the dramatic visual and sensual change to their urban environment. In the way that the Hundertwasser-Haus was socially constructed as *more-than* a home, the coloured cityscape of Tirana is more than just painted matter – it sets the stage for an assemblage of emotions, of sociality and, to an extent, tourism. With reference to Rama’s claim that adding colour is a scheme to ‘resuscitate hope’ in Albanians, Tirana becomes reproduced as a healing space, a city where colour’s emotional politics is used as a way of altering feeling, sensation and hope in the city.

Colour, sense, emotions, affect

The affective register of colour is incredibly complex, powerful and profound. For some, this unique complexity is a gift. The painting in figure 1.3, “Dysthymia” is by Jack Coulter. Jack is a chromesthete. Chromesthesia one colour-focused form of the neurological condition synaesthesia; the experience some individuals have in both the appropriate sensory dimension and another sensory dimension, enables him to see and hear colour. For Jack, and other artistic chromesthete’s like Wassily Kandinsky and the poet Charles Baudelaire, the compounding of expressive, sensorial states enables the world of colour and the world of sense, feeling and human experience to be deeply entwined. Although chromesthesia is an enhanced state of sensoriality, literatures around colour, human response and emotion demonstrate an intimate and complex relationship. *Shlonek* is a popular Arabic greeting for “how are you?” yet its

literal translation is “what is your colour?”, implying that colour is a measure of a person’s wellbeing.⁸⁶



Fig 1.3 “Dythymia” (2016) Jack Coulter. Source: jackcoulter.com.

However, in geography, recent reflections on emotions and affect has seen a surge of interest in how the emotions work in everyday life. Since colour forms a significant part of everyday life and urban experience, it seems odd that little consideration is given in geographical literature on the emotional and affective constitutions of colour in space. This section argues that to deny or ignore that such spatialities and emotional geographies exists within colour in urban interventions can lead to incomplete understandings of space, or a neglect of the embeddedness of geographical experience.

Emotional geography is a relatively new body of work centred on explicitly studying the intersection between emotion, people and place.⁸⁷ In the classic editorial on emotional geographies in 2001, Anderson and Smith introduce the ‘emotional turn’ within geography:

⁸⁶ See Doherty, G. (2010) *Urbanisms of Colour: New Geographies 3*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. p. 2.

⁸⁷ Davidson, J. and Milligan, C. (2004) Embodying emotion sensing space: introducing emotional geographies. *Social & Cultural Geography*. 5(4), pp. 523–532; Bondi, L., Davidson, J. and Smith, M. (2005) *Emotional Geographies*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

We have been forced to confront the glaringly obvious, yet intractable, silencing of emotion in both social research and public life ...this suppression produces an incomplete understanding of the world's working ...to neglect the emotions is to exclude a key set of relations through which lives are lived and societies made⁸⁸

Anderson and Smith make a general plea for thinking about how “the human world is constructed and lived through the emotions.”⁸⁹ Emotional geographers will point out that spaces are never void of emotions. Emotions alter the individual experience of space, but, much like language, they also have a constructive power that is expressed on a larger scale.⁹⁰ Emotional geographers bring attention to how ‘imaginary abstract’ space is reified.⁹¹ By specifically focusing on emotion, it resists the deliberate exclusion of the emotions in academic research.

Although the effects of colour on the emotions have been heavily researched, the sheer volume of work produces vastly alternative results, which are often reduced to insufficient variables such as “age, culture and personal stimulation.”⁹² Goethe’s *Theories of Colours* predominantly explored his own intuitive ideas on the psychological impact on emotion and mood.⁹³ By attending to the living social settings of the city we can better understand the engagements, the sociality and the taking-place of feelings, affects and emotions of colourful spaces, rather than drawing on the labyrinthine body of literature on colour and human action to shape how we design urban colour interventions.

In the re-design of these spaces through colouring, an emotional geography of colour interventions draws on three interrelated central concerns: sense, experience and the construction of place. I would therefore argue for a need to address urban colour interventions through an emotional geographical lens to best get at the relationship between the claims made about colours’ affect and the lived, emotional experience of these constructed coloured spaces. Urban geography’s particular interest

⁸⁸ Anderson, K. and Smith, J. (2001) Emotional Geographies. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 26, p. 7.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Thrift, N. (2004) Intensities of feeling. *Geografiska Annaler*. 86(B), pp. 57–72.

⁹¹ Smith, M. et al. (2010) (eds.) *Emotion, Place and Culture*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

⁹² Aktekin, D.B. and Şimşek, Y. (2011) A new model for chromotherapy application. *Color Research & Application*. 37(2), pp. 154–156.

⁹³ Goethe, J.W. (1810) *Theory of Colours*. Reprint 1970. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

in the emergence, development and continual transformation of cities provides an interested point of reference to study the intervention technologies that amplify, create and mobilise emotions in the geographies of urban development strategies and interventions. The question of urban experience is as complex, intricate, and elusive as its material condition: the city.

The production and mobilisation of emotions in the city has received a surge of interest in recent years partly as a result of the ‘sensory revolution’ in the social sciences.⁹⁴ Steve Pile urges for more emphasis on “*emotional* work that comprise urban experiences” and for attending to the “imaginative, fantastic, emotional – the phantasmagoric – aspects of city life.”⁹⁵ Gillian Rose and Monica Degen’s qualitative study of the sensory experience of two distinct urban environments drew upon a conceptual framework inspired by a ‘social aesthetic perspective’ – “the sensual and material life of objects and the subjects that interact with them [...] with the way the sensual world greets the sensorial body with the affective forces that are generated in such meetings.”⁹⁶ Sensory approaches to understanding the city can be traced back to the writings of Georg Simmel and Walter Benjamin on the rapidly changing modern city.⁹⁷ Interested in politics and poetics of sensual experience, the development of a humanistic geography began to interrogate further the ways places obtain sensory and cultural meanings for humans.⁹⁸ Tuan’s work in particular on space and sensory engagements emphasised how smelling, touching, hearing, seeing and tasting contribute to placemaking. The senses “constantly reinforce each other to provide the intricately ordered and emotion charged world in which we live.”⁹⁹

⁹⁴ See Howes, D. (2006) Charting the sensorial revolution. *Senses and Society*. 1(1), pp. 113–128. See also Degen, M. (2008) *Sensing Cities: Regenerating Public Life in Barcelona and Manchester*. London: Routledge; Mason, J. and Davies, K. (2009) Coming to our senses? A critical approach to sensory methodology. *Qualitative Research*. 9(5), pp. 587–603; Kalekin-Fishman, D. and Low, K. (2010) *Everyday Life in Asia: Social Perspectives on the Senses*. Farnham: Ashgate.

⁹⁵ Pile, S. (2005) *Real Cities: Modernity, Space and the Phantasmagorias of City Life*. London: Sage. p. 3.

⁹⁶ Highmore, B. (2009) A Sideboard Manifesto: Design Culture in an Artificial World. In: Highmore, B. (ed.) (2009) *The Design Culture Reader*. Abingdon: Routledge, p. 10.

⁹⁷ Simmel, G. (1971) The Metropolis and Mental Life. In: Levine, D.N. (ed.) (1971) *Simmel: On Individuality and Social Forms*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, pp. 324–340; Simmel, G. (1997) The sociology of the senses. In: Frisby, F. and Featherstone, M. (eds.) (1997) *Simmel on Culture*. London: Sage, pp. 109–119; Benjamin, W. (1997) On some motifs in Baudelaire. In: Leach, N. (ed.) (1997) *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*. London: Routledge, pp. 22–40.

⁹⁸ See Buttner, A. and Seamon, D. (1980) *The Human Experience of Space and Place*. New York: St. Martin’s Press; Relph, E. (1976) *Place and Placelessness*, London: Pion; Tuan, Y.F. (1977) *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press; Rodaway, P. (1994) *Sensuous Geographies*. London: Routledge.

⁹⁹ Tuan, Y.F. (1977) *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. p. 11.

In stepping beyond ‘representational geographies’ to think about emotions of ways of knowing, being and doing,¹⁰⁰ affectual geographers have developed on notions of affect and scattered these through the work on emotions in geography.¹⁰¹ Definitions of affect have moved away from the more intuitive understanding of the term that identifies affect as emotion. Arguably, this might be the answer to the problem with focussing on emotions, since they merely concern the individual and miss out on the collective, the contagious and the posthuman, as Nigel Thrift convincingly shows in his genealogy of affect.¹⁰² Still, to leave the emotional out of this altogether is also problematic. Massumi brings it in and indeed elevates it to “the most intense (most contracted) expression of [the] capture [of affect].”¹⁰³ Massumi was influenced by Spinoza's definition:

The affections of the body by which the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, helped or hindered, and at the same time the idea of these affections.¹⁰⁴

Thus, an affect is idea and matter, thought and body, involving senses as well as ideas on such senses. What counts is the ability of a body to affect and be affected. Every body is capable of affect. Genevieve Lloyd explains affect as “the passage from one state to another in the affected body – the increase or decrease in its powers of acting.”¹⁰⁵ This definition captures the movement within an affect, the passage from state to state that consequently leads to a greater or lesser ability to “act”, that is to move amongst other bodies and continue affecting and being affected by them. Thomas Gieryn points out in his sociology of buildings that “buildings stabilise social life.”¹⁰⁶ What do colours ‘stabilise’ or fix in communities living in newly coloured buildings? Durkheim argues that “structure itself is *becoming* and one cannot illustrate it except by pursuing this process of becoming. It forms and dissolves continually.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰ See Anderson, K. and Smith, J. (2001) Emotional Geographies. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 26, pp. 7–10.

¹⁰¹ Pile, S. (2010) Emotions and affect in recent human geography. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 35(1), p. 8.

¹⁰² Thrift, N. (2008) *Non-representational theory: space, politics, affect*. London: Routledge.

¹⁰³ Massumi, B. (2002) *Parables for the virtual: Movement, affect, sensation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. p. 35.

¹⁰⁴ Spinoza, B. (2000) *Ethics*. Translated by G. H. R. Parkinson. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 164.

¹⁰⁵ Lloyd, G. (1996) *Spinoza and the Ethics*. London: Routledge. p. 72.

¹⁰⁶ Gieryn, T.F. (2002) What buildings do. *Theory and Society*. 31, p. 35.

¹⁰⁷ Durkheim, E. (1964) Sociology and its Scientific Field. In: Wolff, K.H. (ed.) (1964) *Emile Durkheim et al, Essays on Sociology and Philosophy*. New York: Harper and Row, p. 362.

In this process of becoming, the structure of colour knowledge among practitioners becomes threatened. Studies in Science and technology studies seeks to understand the processes by which certain technologies stabilise, become ubiquitous and effect change in society. In particular, Jane Jacobs's socio-technical exploration of the array of idea(l)s, practices, bodies, materials and discourses within the built environment forms part of her development of Latour's use of the 'black box'. Latour borrowed the term from cyberneticians who use it whenever a piece of machinery or a set of commands is too complex. In its place they draw a little black box about which they need to know nothing but its input and output."¹⁰⁸ Closing of the massive, impenetrable complexity of socio-technical systems (such as decisions regarding colour choices in intervention strategies) enables a decision, artefact or technology to become more-or-less immutable, ready to be taken off as 'hard-fact'. By black boxing certain colour's emotional expectations, and subsequently exporting it by applying colours lavishly onto buildings, ignores the *process* and *experiential* dimensions of becoming. The complex materiality and assemblages of people and coloured space needs to be assessed alongside empirical research on what *claims* architectural and planning practitioners make, rather than collaborations with health practitioners who, as I have illustrated, cannot provide reliable findings on colour's emotional efficacy. In addition to this, colour in interventionist strategies, is in danger of being too reductive or technologically determinist in that it assumes linear, causal relationships between human response to colour and resultant emotions that surface. By not attending to the fuller range of nonhuman powers, we neglect the vitality of matter, or how life is distributed through colours. In attending to these powers and the ways colours flow through and in us, may begin to explain how colours and life are intrinsically connected.

Large and small-scale regeneration: blandness and life

On the 28th November 2013, a *Building* symposium sponsored by Dulux Trade Contract Partnership brought together a range of practitioners from architecture, lighting design, marketing and academia. The debate provided a platform for the

¹⁰⁸ Latour, B. (1987) *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press. pp. 2-3.

discussion of the “opportunities available to the design and construction community by the intelligent use of colour” and how colour impacts and influences the built environment.¹⁰⁹ One of the speakers, James Sloane, a director of architecture and interior design studio Project Orange in Shoreditch, commented on the reimagining of urban space through the language of colour in regeneration:

There is a use of colour in contemporary architecture for regeneration, and I think to some extent [...] there is a danger of this becoming a bit of a cliché that actually, new buildings *must* be colourful just to show that they are new.¹¹⁰

He frames this comment with a slide of “where it goes horribly wrong”, showing an image of a run down building in India across the road where he was working on another project, decorated with white, faded yellows and pinks. “This is just a reminder that just by painting something doesn’t make it any better.”¹¹¹

At its core, urban regeneration strategies transform the material, social and cultural landscape of the city.¹¹² Over the past two decades, the urban landscape of London has undergone rapid change due to state-led regeneration transformations. Regeneration, as a process of urban revival, engenders material, social and historical repairs; from the emergence of new architecture, to the erasure or romanticisation of particular histories through memorialisation, to the resolution of social problems through reimagining of spaces deemed socially problematic. However, many of these regeneration programmes have been criticised for being bland.¹¹³ A renewed emphasis on design in the latter half of the New Labour period with the now defunct *Planning Policy Statement 3 Housing* insisted that “good design should contribute positively to making places better for people.”¹¹⁴ The generation of design codes - later discouraged by the

¹⁰⁹ Ijeh I. (2014) *A Splash of Colour*. Available at: <http://www.building.co.uk/a-splash-of-colour/5064915.article> [Accessed 15 September 2014].

¹¹⁰ Building (2014) *Design Considerations: How colour impacts and influences*. [video] Available at: <http://www.building.co.uk/a-splash-of-colour/5064915.article> [Accessed 15 September 2014].

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Cameron, S. (2003) Gentrification, housing redifferentiation and urban regeneration: ‘Going for growth’ in Newcastle upon Tyne. *Urban Studies*. 40(12), pp. 2367–2382; Porter, L. and Barber, A. (2006) Closing time: the meaning of place and state-led gentrification in Birmingham’s Eastside. *City*. 10(2), pp. 215–234; Lees, L. (2008) Gentrification and social mixing: towards an inclusive urban renaissance?. *Urban Studies*. 45(12), pp. 2449–2470; Larsen, H. G. and Hansen, A. L. (2008) Gentrification—gentle or traumatic? Urban renewal policies and socioeconomic transformations in Copenhagen. *Urban Studies*. 45(12), pp. 2429–2448.

¹¹³ Jones, P. and Evans, J. (2011) Rescue Geography: Place Making, Affect and Regeneration. *Urban Studies*. 49(11), pp. 2315–2330.

¹¹⁴ DCLG (2006b) *Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3), Housing*. London: DCLG.

Coalition government's replacement document *Draft National Planning Policy Framework* (2011) - featured guidance on colour, particularly the way colour is important in contributing to "local distinctiveness."¹¹⁵ The geographies of colour in these codes are relatively standard in architectural colour schemes; honing in on the city's materiality, palettes consist of the colour of the historic buildings, their tops, bottoms and any distinct natural surroundings such as trees. The design codes for architectural colour in these plans did not suggest that bright, bold colours should formulate part of the design, unlike the "cliché" imaginary Sloane discussed. When discussing a particular case study in Cambourne, an evaluation of Design Coding in Practice published in 2006 even noted that façades should be "stoic, serious" or "formal, classical", and designers were warned "DO NOT use an excessive amount of one colour. DO NOT overdo variety."¹¹⁶

Whilst these codes suggest that Sloane's observation might be more complicated than first imagined, it also reinforces the idea that trying to manage and control colour in new urban design is far more difficult than producing a set of guides and recommendations. As Taussig remarked, colour is "a splurging thing, an unmanageable thing, like a prancing horse or a runaway ladder in a stocking."¹¹⁷ It is perhaps this mystery, this evasion of control that makes colour in urban design at once fascinating but also so deeply problematic in practice. The multiple trends, beliefs and perceptions that circulate around colour in the built environment brings into question how these perceptions are reinforced and the constellations of knowledge that circulate around colour practice. The assumption that new urban architecture 'must be colourful' in order to show that they are new is a prominent example of how colour in the architectural imagination is concerned with the way colour creates a particular story or narrative around colour's performance in the city.

Regeneration practices are not always at the lucrative level of state intervention. Recent urban scholarship has considered the role of tactical urbanism in making, low-cost urban improvements. In Spring 2011, Street Plans Collaborative, an urban planning design and advocacy firm based in New York, created a free, downloadable guidebook with ideas for quick, creative fixes in the city; from guerrilla gardening to yarn bombing. *Tactical Urbanism Vol 1: Short Term Action, Long Term Change* was

¹¹⁵ DCLG (2006c) *Preparing Design Codes: A Practice Manual*. London: DCLG.

¹¹⁶ DCLG (2011) *Draft National Planning Policy Framework*. London: DCLG.

¹¹⁷ Taussig, M. (2006) What color is the sacred? *Critical Inquiry*. 33(1), pp. 28-51.

lead by urbanist Mike Lydon. The project allowed people to - often subversively - intervene in urban areas without going through planning channels, and as such, shifted power to communities. It encouraged small scale, creative activities to make urban spaces more “liveable”.¹¹⁸ However, building a new kind of creative urban policy language for itself has seen the tactical urbanism movement criticised for prevailing “neoliberal development agendas” as outlined by Jamie Peck in his paper ‘Struggling with the creative class’.¹¹⁹ As such, tactical urbanism has been considered part of the Creative City discourse made popular by Richard Florida.¹²⁰ According to Oli Mould:

This creativity thesis (that has become central to mobile urban policy) has been critiqued as vacuous and merely a justification for existing private-public urban redevelopment strategies... that have deleterious effects on the social fabric of urban life via gentrifying processes.¹²¹

Similar to tactical urbanism strategies, Douglas has noted the rise of other small-scale, community-led urban interventions dubbed ‘Do-It-Yourself’ Urbanism, describing it as:

Civic-minded and intended toward the functional improvement of lived urban spaces through skilful, playful and localized actions, these increasingly visible yet often unattributed practices complicate common assumptions and have received little attention from social scientists or urban policy and planning professionals.¹²²

DIY and tactical urbanism fall under the umbrella of a range of different community orientated, interventionist urbanisms dubbed ‘insurgent’, ‘guerrilla’, ‘everyday’ ‘participatory’ or ‘grassroots’. However, there is a link between these strategies and the specific *reparative* work it is seen to do in cities. In the opening page of *Tactical Urbanism*, Lydon describes Tactical Urbanism as “city repair”; bringing closer together the notion that creative, community urbanism interventions can be considered

¹¹⁸ Lydon, M., Bartman, D., Woudstra, R. and Khawazad, A. (2011) *Tactical Urbanism Vol 1: Short term action, long term change*. [Online] http://issuu.com/streetplanscollaborative/docs/tactical_urbanism_vol_2_final [Accessed 15th September 2017].

¹¹⁹ Peck, J. (2005) Struggling with the creative class. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. 29, pp. 740-770.

¹²⁰ Florida, R. (2002a) *The rise of the creative class and how it's transforming work, leisure and everyday life*. New York: Basic Books.

¹²¹ Mould, O. (2014) Tactical Urbanism: The new vernacular in the creative city. *Geography Compass*. 8 (8). p. 530.

¹²² Ibid: 531.

expressions of repair.¹²³ The Tactical Urbanism vernacular, therefore, could be described as a package of activities that enable communities to creatively ‘patch up’ city spaces in order to improve their subsequent ‘liveability’, questioning how these practices imbue life, the role that these reparative practices play, and the discourses around the quality of urban spaces in question.

Narratives around decay as drivers for regeneration are a key feature in Ben Campkin’s 2013 book *Remaking London: Decline and Regeneration in Urban Culture*.¹²⁴ Campkin animates how representations of urban regeneration and degradation play a crucial role in shaping experience and understanding the material conditions of contested places. Drawing on Kristeva’s psychoanalytic term the *abject*, popular in recent geographical scholarship, Campkin argues that the will to improve is part of a deep seated anxiety around abjection and decay. While abjection and decay in Campkin’s book often refers to the gentrifying, social cleansing of state-led urban regeneration, I develop on this interconnection between revitalising urban projects and the idea of abjection with a consideration of urban grey. Grey, according to Cormac McCarthy in his 2006 novel *The Road*, is the colour of the dying; portrayed as falling grey snow.¹²⁵ The lifelessness of grey also appears in the city of Kansas in the film *The Wizard of Oz* and occupies a strange, idealised sense of normality in *Pleasantville*. Grey, according to Batchelor, is:

The colour of loss... it is not the colour of death, perhaps, but of purgatory; grey is suspended: no longer white but not yet black; hardly alive but not yet dead; drifting slowly away from existence and towards extinction.¹²⁶

This despairing narrative around grey is further demonstrated by some of the synonyms present in the *Collins English Dictionary*, referring to grey as also:

1. dull, dark, gloomy cloudy, murky, drab, misty, foggy, overcast, sunless, depressing, grim, discouraging, gloomy, hopeless, dismal, dreary, sombre, unpromising, disheartening, joyless, cheerless, comfortless.¹²⁷

¹²³ Lydon, M., Bartman, D., Woudstra, R. and Khawazad, A. (2011) *Tactical Urbanism Vol 1: Short term action, long term change*. p. 1 [Online] http://issuu.com/streetplanscollaborative/docs/tactical_urbanism_vol_2_final [Accessed 15th September 2017].

¹²⁴ Campkin, B. (2013) *Remaking London: Decline and Regeneration in Urban Culture*. IB Taurus: London.

¹²⁵ McCarthy, C. (2006) *The Road*. New York: Vintage Books.

¹²⁶ Batchelor, D. (2014) *The Luminous and the Grey*. Reaktion Books: London.

Grey is a colour often cited in narratives around regeneration, but itself is not critically questioned in urban literature. As the antithesis of grey, bright, saturated colours are often used in efforts to *repair* the drab, depressing and dreary condition of urban greyness. In the next section, I introduce repair as the key conceptual framework connecting together ideas of colour and life, developing on current theoretical work to carve out a more nuanced conceptualisation in this thesis.

The pursuit of repair

In order to examine the practices and performances of colour, this thesis develops a focus on ‘repair’ as an analytical framework. I trace the conceptual idea of repair through a range of urban, social and psychoanalytic literatures. Drawing on these literatures enables me to productively examine the diverse expressions of repair in this thesis. These literatures enliven the material, emotional and historical repairs I present in Chapter 3, the social repairs enacted in Chapter 4 and the complex orchestrations of repair in Chapter 5.

The critical place of repair in urban geography can be found in *Cities: Re-imagining the Urban*, in 2002, by Nigel Thrift and Ash Amin.¹²⁸ Of these two geographers, it is Thrift who has been the more significant author on the role of urban repair and the possibility of the city. Ash Amin’s vision of a ‘good city’¹²⁹, a practical urban utopianism, considered ‘repair’ as one of the four key registers that could gird the collective basis of urban life. Repair is idea Amin draws from Thrift’s 2005 paper ‘But Malice Afterthought: Cities and the natural history of hatred’.¹³⁰ This paper was part of Thrift’s wider project to develop non-representational theory, as in part “an attempt to take practices seriously.”¹³¹ Thrift’s engagement with the notion of repair can be traced in two ways. In one, repair highlights an attention to practice. For Thrift, current scholarship lacked “a sense of mutability...[and] the moments of inspired

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Amin, A. and Thrift, N. (2002) *Cities: Re-imagining the urban*. Polity Press: Cambridge.

¹²⁹ Amin, A. (2016) The good city. *Urban Studies*. 43 (5-6), pp. 1009-1023.

¹³⁰ Thrift, N. (2005) But malice afterthought: cities and the natural history of hatred. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 30(2), pp. 133-50.

¹³¹ Thrift, N. (2008) *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*. Routledge: London.

improvisation” found in the “remorseless work of maintenance and repair.”¹³² Repair, he argued, accomplishes the “systematic replacement of place” which is essential in making the city.¹³³ In keeping with non-representational theory’s consideration of not just the macro processes of urban life, but the micro, too, Thrift’s project directs attention to the minutiae of repair; the often very ordinary activities that maintain and sustain the city. In the second, Thrift’s repair emerges from the prevalent dystopia characterising city life; the view that miseries and vulnerabilities of city life and misanthropy blight urban experience. Thrift opens ‘But Malice Afterthought’ with “[t]he idea of the city as doomed... one of the common tropes of urban representation”, which he later counters with various arguments around urban resilience.¹³⁴ After setting up and countering this trope,¹³⁵ Thrift seeks to move towards a city of possibility. In order to make this movement clear, Thrift points towards the volume of repair work that happens around us at without us even knowing, from mending and cleaning, to patching and putting things back together:

Modern urban dwellers are surrounded by the hum of continuous repair and maintenance and that, furthermore, some of the quintessential everyday urban experiences are generated from them, from the noise of pneumatic drills boring into roads to the knock or ring of a repairman come to mend a broken down this or that.¹³⁶

These repair practice help keep the city resilient and in a cycle of constantly coming undone and being stuck back together. Thrift highlights the role repair and maintenance play in knitting together “emotional knots” that bind individuals and groups, and, crucially, the resiliency and good that is integral to the city’s ‘liveability’.¹³⁷ Thrift argues that it is these affective and emotional bonds that enrich maintenance and repair by enabling such things as the generation of social capital within individual communities; inspiring civic-mindedness and belonging; and drawing together

¹³² Ibid: 21.

¹³³ Thrift, N. (2005) But malice afterthought: cities and the natural history of hatred. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 30(2), p. 135.

¹³⁴ Ibid: 134.

¹³⁵ The ‘doomed city’ is just one urban representation. A more recent, positive representation of the city as hopeful can be found in Edward Glaeser’s *Triumph of the City*. See Glaeser, E. (2012) *Triumph of the City: How urban spaces make us human*. Pan Books. London.

¹³⁶ Thrift, N. (2005) But malice afterthought: cities and the natural history of hatred. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 30(2), p. 136.

¹³⁷ Ibid: 136-138.

strangers in the spirit of recognition.¹³⁸ These civic relationships add a vital affective infrastructure to the cosmopolitan character of the modern city. Furthermore, Thrift and Amin highlight the importance of leisure and recreational activities in building this emotional, reparative infrastructure work, beyond the (in)visible material repairs unfolding in the urban fabric. The reproduction of affective networks has been also developed by scholars Anderson (2006), Burkitt (2004) and Crouch (2000), who have each considered how leisure brings strangers together in discrete urban spaces.¹³⁹ In these examples, a more social-oriented repair is enacted within these affective networks in the pursuit of unity. This is something particularly pertinent when considering the misanthropy present in pessimistic urban imaginations. Politically, Thrift and Amin regard this as crucial in “expanding urban solidarity”, emerging from “urban care which draws on the deep wells of caring and compassion.”¹⁴⁰

Although Thrift’s argument takes repair seriously in urban geography, he does not use significant empirical evidence to illustrate how repair is enacted, contested or pursued. In ‘But Malice Afterthought’, there are neither people nor any real empirical data of the practices that unfold in the city; no street-combers, bin men or women, or workers replacing, patching, fixing or cleaning the city. As such, Thrift’s work lacks in empirical material and as such, his argumentation is missing the taking place and lived practices of repair.

In their paper ‘Out of Order: Understanding repair and maintenance’ (2007) Thrift and fellow geographer Steven Graham further develop the idea of urban repair in the social sciences, pointing to the ways in which these activities contribute to and constitute the practices of everyday resilience and urban care.¹⁴¹ Graham and Thrift’s theory of repair uses the contemporary city as a laboratory, which they argue is by large defined by “the myriad functions of maintenance and repair which themselves produce much of what might be regarded as the stuff of urban phenomenology.”¹⁴² Taking a phenomenological approach inspired by Heidegger and ‘thing-power’, the processes of

¹³⁸ See Duff, C. (2009) The drifting city: the role of affect and repair in the development of ‘Enabling Environments’. *International Journal of Drug Policy*. 20(3), p. 205.

¹³⁹ See: Anderson, B. (2006) Becoming and being hopeful: towards a theory of affect. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. 24(5), 733-752; Burkitt, I. (2004) The time and space of everyday life. *Cultural Studies*. 18 (2/3), 211-277 and Crouch, D. (2000) Places around us: Embodied lay geographies in leisure and tourism. *Leisure Studies*. 19(1), pp. 63-76.

¹⁴⁰ Thrift, N. (2005) But malice afterthought: cities and the natural history of hatred. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 30(2), p. 144.

¹⁴¹ Graham, S. and Thrift, N. (2007) Out of Order: Understanding repair and maintenance. *Theory, Culture, Society*, 24. (3), pp. 1-25

¹⁴² Ibid: 1-2.

maintenance and repair are characterised by a set of qualities. To quote Verbeek, “what a thing does, the way in which a thing is presented as a thing, cannot be reduced to something non-thingly and must be conceived from the thing itself.”¹⁴³ As such, this approach signals the reparative potential of ‘things’, whether that be an object, knowledge, or, perhaps even, a colour, and in addition to this, the practical affective politics it might signal. Furthermore, ‘Out of Order’ develops on a more complex politics of repair, concerned as much with the different levels on which repair may operate, the geopolitics and uneven distribution of repair services, and the scale of repair:

Maintenance and repair is an on-going process, but it can be designed in many different ways in order to produce many different outcomes and these outcomes can be more or less efficacious: there is, in other words, a *politics* of repair and maintenance ... [ranging] through many issues and scales.¹⁴⁴

Graham and Thrift’s paper attempts to ‘surface the invisible work’ of repair using a vast range of examples from the geopolitics of repair after conflict¹⁴⁵, recycling and electronic waste, and the commodification of repair.¹⁴⁶ Their overarching argument is to stress that repair and maintenance is not incidental, describing repair as “the engine room of modern economies and societies.”¹⁴⁷ Inevitably, this raises questions around who repair is for and the complex systems that are bound up in practices of repair, care and maintenance, and the struggle between the private, the public and citizens over the establishment of duties of care across the city fabric.¹⁴⁸

In addressing the various manifestations of repair in enabling ‘life’, it is important to turn to the urban experience of cities and the function of the social in enabling repair to take place. One area of scholarship that Graham and Thrift’s geographic work on repair has had a strong influence on is the cognate discipline of

¹⁴³ Verbeek, P. (2004) *What things do: Philosophical reflections on technology, agency and design*. Pennsylvania University Press: University Park.

¹⁴⁴ Graham, S. and Thrift, N. (2007) Out of Order: Understanding repair and maintenance. *Theory, Culture, Society*, 24. (3).p. 17.

¹⁴⁵ See Graham, S. (2005) Switching Cities Off: Urban Infrastructure and US Air Power. *City*. 9(2), pp. 172-193.

¹⁴⁶ Graham and Thrift borrow Susan Leigh-Star’s term ‘surface the invisible work’. See Leigh Star, S. (1999) The Ethnography of Infrastructure. *American Behavioral Scientist*. 43(3), pp. 377-391.

¹⁴⁷ Graham, S. and Thrift, N. (2007) Out of Order: Understanding repair and maintenance. *Theory, Culture, Society*, 24. (3), p. 20.

¹⁴⁸ See Chelcea, L. and Pulay, G. (2015) Networked infrastructures and the “local”: Flows and connectivity in a postsocialist city. *CITY*, 9(2-3). pp. 344-355.

urban sociology. Tim Hall and Robin James Smith draw on Graham and Thrift's work in order to explore the politics of care and repair, considering acts of repair in both the physical *and* social fabric of the city.¹⁴⁹ Hall and Smith's 2015 paper *Care and Repair and the Politics of Urban Kindness* takes inspiration from Thrift's evocation of physical repair in order to argue for social urban repairs, directed at the lives of those in the city whose lives have broken down. For Hall and Smith, these practices of upkeep, renovation and maintenance form "part of an under-observed infrastructure of kindness that cities cannot do without."¹⁵⁰ Along a similar thread to Hall and Smith's ethics of repair, Steven J. Jackson's work *Rethinking Repair* re-examines media and technology studies from the standpoint of 'broken world' thinking: an orientation that takes seriously the frailty of the human, technological and natural worlds around us, and foregrounds acts of breakdown, maintenance and repair as central to technological and human experience.¹⁵¹ Here, repair is imagined as an on-going act of care, a site of knowledge and power, creativity and innovation.

The sheer sociotechnical complexity of cities has provided a rich source of scholarship on the role of repair in the contingency of sociotechnical systems. In the socio-technical imagination, repair practices help to stabilise technological systems, infrastructure or complex networks. Weaving between scholarship as vast as repairing the credibility of nuclear weapon knowledge in the post-Cold War politics, repair and the sociology of workplace politics and the farm industry, in many of these examples, repair is used as a device to maintain control or social order. In these examples, repair is imagined along a continuum: at one end there is maintenance, encompassing "relatively routine efforts, such as repainting a bridge" through to more drastic, costly approaches.¹⁵² On a broader scale, the last ten years have seen a proliferation of collective mobilisations of repair and maintenance, aimed at challenging the patterns of production and consumption within neoliberal capitalism.¹⁵³ For example, in the global North, the proliferation of Repair Cafes, Restarter Parties and online tutorials such as iFixit.com mobilise community, collective action to share mending skills.

¹⁴⁹ Hall, T. and Smith, R.J. (2015) Care and repair and the politics of urban kindness. *Sociology*. 49(1) pp. 3-18.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid: 6.

¹⁵¹ Jackson, S. J. (2014) Rethinking Repair. In Gillespie, T. Boczkowski, P. and Foot, K.(eds) *Media technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality and Society*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

¹⁵² Ibid. See also Henke, C.R. (2000) Making a place for science: The field trial. *Social Studies of Science*. 30(4) pp. 135-142 and Henke, C.R. (2008) *Cultivating Science, Harvesting Power: Science and Industrial Agriculture in California*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

¹⁵³ Chertkovskyaya, E. and Loaker, B. (2016) Work and capitalism, entangled. *ephemera*, 16 (3), pp. 1-20.

Breaking down repair into smaller components, Sims and Henke identify three types of sociotechnical repair: discursive repair, material repair and institutional repair.¹⁵⁴ Here, discursive repair refers to attempts to maintain the cultural frames we use to describe and understand the world; material repair, likely to be the most familiar of the three iterations of repair, simply describes fixing what is broken; whilst the institutional is situated at the scale of repairing social structures and practices. To illustrate the interrelated workings of these three types of repair, Sims and Henke use the example of a sociotechnical system:

For example, a chemical company that has experienced an accident may make institutional and material repairs to prevent a recurrence of the accident, while simultaneously using these repair efforts as part of a discursive effort to repair the company's public image.¹⁵⁵

The city of continual upkeep, care and maintenance, even if it comprises mundane, everyday activity, is central in making urban life possible.¹⁵⁶

In architectural geography, urban repair can also be located in Tim Edensor's study of the mutable stone of St Ann's Church, Manchester. Edensor argued that in the quest for authenticity, repair is a distributed and negotiated act. The repair and preservation work of the church, for example, demonstrates that socio-material repair work enact various, often opposing, orders:

Decisions about repair, aesthetic appearance, historical worth, architectural and heritage value may persist as orthodoxy for a period of time or they may be hotly contested... Runcorn stone becomes a widely popular building material across north-west England for a time before becoming unsuitable for heavily polluted industrial settings; sandblasting prevails as a repair technique but is discredited; biofilms are left to grow because they are not currently considered to impair aesthetic appreciation.¹⁵⁷

Edensor's cultural and historical examination of the changing and contested processes of repair and maintenance considers the vital urban materiality of stone in the ongoing

¹⁵⁴ Sims, B. and Henke, C.R. (2012) Repairing credibility: Repositioning nuclear weapons knowledge after the Cold War. *Social Studies of Science*. 42(3), pp. 324-347.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid: 326.

¹⁵⁶ Hall, T. and Smith, R.J. (2015) Care and repair and the politics of urban kindness. *Sociology*. 49(1), pp. 3-18.

¹⁵⁷ Edensor, T. (2011) Entangled agencies, material networks and repair in a building assemblage: The mutable stone of St Ann's church, Manchester. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 36 (2) p. 249.

emergence of the ‘charismatic’ 300-year old St Ann’s Church.¹⁵⁸ Using examples of human and non-human maintenance, Edensor draws on the non-fiction fantasy book *A World Without Us* (2007) by Alan Weisman to demonstrate the central importance of on-going urban maintenance.¹⁵⁹ In Weisman’s dystopia, he imagines what would happen to Manhattan if human life suddenly ceased: from subways flooding to concrete fissures and widespread urban fires. Under contemporary measures to conserve built heritage, Edensor demonstrates the multiple techniques of maintenance and repair needed to conserve the stone buildings that are such a key part of Britain’s historic urban fabric.

Leaving the urban field, the cultural geographers Merle Patchett and Katy Foster observe repair in a more unusual place. Patchett and Foster’s work on the surface geographies of taxidermy documents experimental attempts to “revive and repair” zoological specimens.¹⁶⁰ In this sense, repair for the taxidermist is for the most part a ‘restorative’ practice. However, Patchett and Foster’s use of repair as revival shares a vitalist language that spans across the materiality of the object itself, challenging the priority given to the representational surface. Engaging with a blue antelope skull, they observe the ways its object history and display work with the object itself in order to repair its afterlife. The ethos of revival and repair is embedded in their ability to “recover and revive the entangled nature and cultural geographies of their making and continual maintenance”¹⁶¹ Furthermore, the relationship between repair, the dead and the surface are rich, extremely relevant themes in my own geographical work, and a crucial component in reproducing and redefining the urban imaginaries that feature later on.

From the outset, this thesis has made clear its aim to observe the way colour is mobilised in the pursuit of repair. However in exploring the regimes of repair through urban and social accounts, the deeper, psychoanalytic level of repair – and perhaps more importantly, why we repair in the first place – seems strangely absent. This is something particularly curious given the emotional and affective thread that is woven in many of the above accounts. Additionally, emerging out of this social and urban discussion on the many currencies of repair is a focus on the social, integration and

¹⁵⁸ Ibid: 238.

¹⁵⁹ Weisman, A. (2007) *A World Without Us*. Virgin: London.

¹⁶⁰ Patchett, M and Foster, K. (2008) Repair work: surfacing the geographies of dead animals. *Museum and Society*, 6 (2), pp. 98-122.

¹⁶¹ Ibid: 101.

cooperation. In order to explore this in conjunction, I turn to the register of psychoanalysis and the idea of reparation.

The relationship between geography and psychoanalysis is neither new nor without dispute. Felicity Callard describes the ‘psychoanalytic turn’ in social and cultural geography where insights from Freud, Lacan, Winnicott, Kristeva and others have been used to “deepen and re-orient our understanding of subjectivity and socio-spatial orientation.”¹⁶² Many geographers have drawn on psychoanalytic writing in order to address particular questions in their own geographic scholarship. Steve Pile in particular, who authored the book *Psychoanalytic Geographies* (2016) with Paul Kingsbury, has found particular value in psychoanalytic enquiry in qualitative research, since:

Nowhere has the relationship between the questioner, questioned and the lived world been more closely examined than in the psychoanalytic literature... and much of this debate concerns power relations in the nexus of knowing, communicating and the personal.¹⁶³

Furthermore, psychoanalysis has been a rich resource in which to study how anxieties play out in internal and external relations and between groups. David Sibley’s work in particular has been significant in exploring this geographic idea, arguing that:

Psychoanalytical theory has considerable value because it can help us to understand better not only the representation of others but also our own feeling about the abject, our own insecurities about difference... the ‘psychoanalytic turn’, rather than a fad as this term suggests... provides a vocabulary and cues for observation and analysis which are helpful in getting to grips with difference.¹⁶⁴

Combining the manifold relationship of maintenance and social repair “adding knots of solidarity and mutuality, trust and reciprocity to the city’s social and affective fabric”¹⁶⁵ and Sibley’s argument of psychoanalytic theory’s ability to enable us to get to grips with difference is an insightful vantage point to discuss another dimension of

¹⁶² Callard, F. (2003) The taming of psychoanalysis in geography. *Social & Cultural Geography*. 4 (3), pp. 295-312.

¹⁶³ Pile, S. (1991) Practicing interpretative geography. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 16, pp. 458-469.

¹⁶⁴ Sibley, D. (1995) *Geographies of Exclusion: Societies and Difference in the West*. London: Routledge.

¹⁶⁵ Hall, T. and Smith, R.J. (2015) Care and repair and the politics of urban kindness. *Sociology*. 49(1)3. p. 207.

repair. It is with this question in mind that I turn to the psychoanalytic work of Melanie Klein and her theory of reparation.¹⁶⁶

Melanie Klein was an Austrian psychotherapist and an early pioneer in the use of psychoanalysis of children. In her observations during the 1920s, she developed the notions of ‘making good’.¹⁶⁷ For Klein, innate human destructive phantasies coexist with feelings of love, guilt and reparation. Klein dealt with ‘broken’ (*kaput*) and ‘good again’ (*wieder gut*) in her young patients. She recorded how young patients’ psychic state – particularly the depressive position – depended on their relationship with objects. Klein observed that when faced with feelings of guilt, anxiety and a sense of hatred amongst themselves for causing harm, there is an awakening of a wish to restore and make reparation for the damage that has been caused. This, Klein called, enabled a *reparative drive*, bringing about a step towards integration. Grounded in love for the other, reparation involves facing loss and damage in order to make efforts to repair and restore, promote virtuous cycles and furthermore, engender feelings of hope and concern. Reparation, therefore, is the psychological need to make things good, to mend and repair relationships with others.

Using Klein’s idea of reparation highlights another type of repair absent in the geographic and sociological scholarship on repair, but an integral part of the modern city; the reparation of relationships and concomitant feelings of remorse. Whilst the social repair and care presented by Hall and Smith crosses over with many of the themes of reparation, Klein’s psychoanalytic narrative sharpens the focus on our relationships with others. A Kleinian lens provides a productive conceptual tool to consider culture, repair and ethics in the social world.

These urban, social and psychoanalytic renditions of repair are connected by the drive to make well again both the city and the social. However, bringing repair into conversation with colour unravels a long history of therapeutic approaches that has been part of treating and repairing the body in healthcare environments. The work of Howard Kemp-Prosser in particular, one of the leading British pioneers responsible for bringing colour into healing environments in the UK in the 1910s, believed in the curative power of colour. Kemp-Prosser developed colour schemes for healthcare centres in the early 20th Century, fascinated by colour’s medicinal, sedative and stimulating effects. His approach was incredibly sensitive to the ‘seen’ and ‘unseen’

¹⁶⁶ David Sibley has previously drawn upon the work of Klein. Writing about the spaces of childhood, Sibley drew together both Kristeva and Klein in his geographic enquiries.

¹⁶⁷ Klein, M. (1929) *Love Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945*. New York: The Free Press.

affective forces in our atmosphere. Like many other scholars interested in the affective power light and colour therapy has on the body, Kemp-Prossor was fascinated by how healing methods could be generated by measuring each colour wavelength and applying them appropriately to generate emotional states that facilitated the healing process. Kemp-Prossor believed that certain colours had certain effects on the body and the mind, and, importantly, the sympathetic treatment through the colour of their surrounding could aid recovery. He championed the ‘Colour Cure’, a treatment for shellshock and other wartime neurological disorders, designing a ward in sunlight yellow, spring green and firmament blues (see fig 1.4).



Fig 1.4 The Kemp Prossor ‘Colour Cure’ Ward.

Source: <http://blog.maryevans.com>

In health and wellbeing literatures, one of the most distinctive contributions to knowledge around restoration, and indeed, in many ways, colour, is illustrated particularly in discussions of the value of green space. Urban greening is a practice

where greenery such as planting trees into cities, constructing vertical green walls made entirely of a range of plants and flowers, or green parks and open spaces are built into urban sites. The main function of urban greening serves both human and non-human life. However, as Gareth Doherty points out in his book *Paradoxes of Green* (2017), the presence of green in cities is controversial, presented as a moral imperative dogged with significant environmental costs.¹⁶⁸ Greening cities as tactic to improve health and wellbeing features heavily in local and national policy in the England National Policy Planning Framework and the London Plan. However, as a consequence of London's growth which has seen a prioritisation of revenue generating building developments, the production of green space is often complicated. Urban greening provides two restorative avenues; greening, when understood ecologically, enhances the sustainability profile of a city. Secondly, urban green space can also be viewed as a site and enactor of a wider, increased production of public health and wellbeing. In the first avenue, greening urban space values the sustainable protection of non-human life, where open vegetated areas benefits urban nature, eco-systems, and providing relief to the urban heat island effect. However these effects are not limited to non-human life. In a UK government White Paper entitled 'The Natural Choice', Defra stated that "biodiversity and its constituent ecosystem services are critically important to our wellbeing and economic prosperity."¹⁶⁹ Empirical links to psychological wellbeing and urban parks and green space has demonstrated effects such as stress reduction¹⁷⁰, encounters with nature and opportunities for healthy solitude¹⁷¹ and rejuvenate through peace and tranquillity these spaces provide.¹⁷²

Thinking through the politics of repair enacted by urban green space, the work of both Ulrich (1984) and Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) define urban green space as

¹⁶⁸ Doherty, G. (2017) *Paradoxes of Green: Landscapes of a City-State*. University of California Press: California.

¹⁶⁹ Defra. (2011) *The Natural Choice*. London: Stationary Office.

¹⁷⁰ See Ulrich, R. S. (1981) Natural versus urban scenes: some psychophysiological effects. *Environment and Behaviour*. 13(5), pp. 523-556; Ulrich, R.S., Simmons, R.F., Losito, B.D., Fiorito, E. Miles, M. A. and Zelson, M. (1991) Stress recovery during exposure to natural and urban environments. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 11, pp. 201-230.

¹⁷¹ Fuller, R.A., Irvine, K. N., Devine-Wright, P. Warren, P. H., and Gaston, K. J. (2007) Psychological benefits of green space increase with biodiversity. *Biology Letters*, 3, pp. 390-394.

¹⁷² See Kaplan, S. and Kaplan, R. (2003) Health, supportive environments, and the reasonable person model. *American Journal of Public Health*, 93 (9), pp. 1484-1489; Song, Y. Gee, G. C. Fan, Y., and Takeuchi, D. T. (2007) Do physical neighborhood characteristics matter in predicting traffic stress and health outcomes? *Transportation Research, Part F: Traffic Psychology and Behavior*. 10, pp. 164-176.

‘restorative’; shaping peoples health related practices and health-promoting activities.¹⁷³

The promotion of green spaces for health and recreation is not new, rising to particular prominence in the 19th century, where urban healtheries aimed to promote social and moral improvement of the urban population. Furthermore, green spaces during this era – particularly in east London – came to stand for sites of disease and social abjection, aired out by parks described as the purifying ‘lungs of London’.¹⁷⁴

Discourses around urban green space is populated with reparative language across its human and non-human realms. Hartig described it as a type of psychological ‘restoration’¹⁷⁵; greening can be considered as enhances a city’s ‘resilience’ which attends to urban green space can be use as a preventive measure against urban crises such as flooding; and the ‘rejuvenating’, peaceful narratives underpinning our interaction with natural green space. Following on from the multifarious use of subtly different reparative languages in the next section, the next section describes the production of the conceptual development of repair that runs through this thesis.

Conceptual development of repair

Drawing on these cultural, urban and psychoanalytic approaches and cognate literatures around regeneration, resilience, health and wellbeing, my focus on repair critically responds to the vital materiality of colour. In order to examine repair’s politics in each empirical chapter, while I draw inspiration from the pre-existing literature, I will illustrate a range of expressions that have emerged from my analysis of repair. Rather than characterise repair under just one reparative lens, I will demonstrate how repair is enacted in subtly different ways and resulting implications. This approach enables me to develop more in-depth lines of enquiry around repair based on empirical evidence, many of which are rooted in the connections between repair, space and the body. Furthermore, it approaches space from a range of urban

¹⁷³ See Ulrich, R. (1984) View through a window may influence recovery from surgery. *Science*, 224, pp. 420-421 and Kaplan, R. and Kaplan, S. (1989) *The experience of nature: a psychological perspective*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁷⁴ See Brown, T. (2013) The making of urban ‘healtheries’: the transformation of cemeteries and burial grounds in late-Victorian London. *Journal of Historical Geography*. 42, pp. 12-23.

¹⁷⁵ Hartig, T. (2008) Green Space, psychological restoration and health inequality. *Lancet*, 372(9650), pp. 1614-1615.

and architectural scales, considering of how practices enacting repair can be connected to wider debates around the body, emotion and labour.

As I have illustrated, many accounts on repair foreground the material and the social; the material repair of the stone of St Ann's Church, Manchester, or the social ties and emotional knots that enable the liveable city, for example. However, it is clear that repair is not only practiced differently along these material and social scales, but each different inflection of repair is unique. This thesis further develops and builds on the concept of repair through empirical analysis of the performance and practice of colour and the different ways repair is engaged with in practice. In making the city, the social and the body well again, repair stimulates discussion on the diverse and subtle ways repair is enacted in each of these scales. For example, in architectural discourse, 'regeneration' – literally meaning 'create again' – engenders a particular politics of repair embedded in ideas of bringing back to life, and considers previous spaces as dead or unliveable. Resilience, a critical term in urban literatures, describes the capacity of a system to absorb damage and return or reorganise; a promise to return to a set state.¹⁷⁶ However, 'restoration', as in Tim Edensor's account of St. Ann's church, is an inflection of repair concerned with returning back to a particular, former state. Restoration in Patchett and Foster's account of repair, however, shares a more vitalist language, and moves away from solely physical repairs to historical restoration. I argue that repair is a complex lexicon, entangled in different inflections and implications.

In making well again the urban, the social and the body, the use of reparative terminology often becomes clouded. In order to give the politics and ethics of repair critical attention, I examine the ways colour and repair interact through a range of different practices and performances. In the examination of colour and repair, this thesis' development of repair enables a closer, more iterative understanding of how colour is mobilised in order to repair, and helps unravel dense political, emotional, economic and social fabric of the city and how this reveals wider emotional, material and social agendas.

Drawing on Graham, Thrift and Amin's work on repair and how we 'keep-up' the good city, I have taken the material and affective perspective on repair and further developed it within the geographies of architecture to illustrate four different mobilisations of repair. In these four mobilisations, two consider the role repair has in

¹⁷⁶ See Ginn, F. and Francis, R.A. (2014) Urban greening and sustaining urban natures in London. In *Sustainable London? The future of a global city*. Bristol: Policy Press.

the architectural knowledge economy. The other two consider the language of regeneration and how discourses around the idea of ‘regenerating’ has a particular currency in debates around repair that has not received much scholarly attention. These conceptualisations form the first empirical chapter (chapter 3). In the second empirical chapter, repair is developed through a consideration of how practices of material, social and emotional repairs are imagined, justified and enacted, inspired by the emotional knots that give the city life (see chapter 4). These conceptual developments merge the urban, social and emotional using a range of qualitative material to demonstrate how ‘repairing’ through colour is a popular urban practice in many cities across the world. Finally, in the final empirical chapter, repair is examined through the discourses and expressions of others seeking to make good. Critically examining the function and propagation of happiness in popular urban culture, I demonstrate the orchestration of repair in popular, colourful urban culture, drawing from and motivated by the Kleinian idea of making relationships well again (see chapter 5).

Conclusion

This chapter has interrogated the various tensions around colour, space and the body. From physics to philosophy, architectural practice, and health and wellbeing, the trouble with colour knowledge has resulted in the emergence of multiple, disputed knowledges. Mapping out these key bodies of knowledge, I situate this thesis within wider literatures around health, cultural and urban geography. By drawing attention to the pathological history of colour, I argue that colourful pursuits that intervene in urban space goes against exoticised, primitivist constructions of colour. Placed next to dominating discourses of colour as renewal, regeneration and repair, these chromophobic philosophical associations are critically questioned. Exploring the discursive field of colour knowledge, the first half of empirical chapter 3 on the architectural geographies of colour will examine this tension in greater detail.

This chapter shows that colour’s relationship with the body is particularly problematic, as demonstrated through a discussion of the weak and often anecdotal empirical research on colour’s emotional impact on bodies. I have explored the relationship between colour and the body through an examination of environmental

psychological literatures, and situated this within the context of healthcare space. I empirically examine the relationship between colour design, knowledge and the body in the latter half of the first empirical chapter, focusing on case study of Finchley Memorial Hospital.

Drawing on literatures around tactical urbanism and small scale regeneration, I have used wider literatures around grey to demonstrate how there needs to be a more critical discussion on the way places are constructed as requiring change. Recent practices empowering communities, such as tactical, DIY or insurgent urbanism are particularly poignant areas of scholarship to build on these interpretations of place. Chapter 4 in this thesis gives an in depth, critical analysis of a community initiative that empowers urban communities to redesign their neighbourhood places into new, liveable spaces.

This literature review also addressed colour's material and emotional economies. In particular, I drew on recent anthropological work in order to develop colour's materiality in the urban realm, and the critical role of emotions and affect in geography. Using on literature around materiality and matter, I warn against the temptation for colour to be relegated to the realm of the superficial, and instead, give greater consideration to the material and the active, live property of colour, and how sensations and affect move between bodies and through space. Situating this research within these fields, the empirical work present in chapter 5 will demonstrate my own examination of the production and movement of emotion, affect and the development of atmosphere in orchestrating particular emotional states.

In addressing key urban, social and psychoanalytic literatures, I have critically discussed and developed theoretical debates on repair. Drawing on the work of Nigel Thrift and Steven Graham and Melanie Klein, and considered in line with discourses around health and repair, I have shown the range of literatures that have informed my conceptual development. This final section has demonstrated how my own development on repair enables a more nuanced, interrogative examination of the different operations of repair, and how this will be used throughout the thesis.

The following chapter is a reflective exploration of this thesis' methodology. I explain the difficulties encountered, both practically and epistemologically, with the study of colour and practice. Finally, I give a detailed explanation of the methodological approaches taken in each chapter, critically reflecting on the research process.

Chapter 2

Researching colour: A grey area

This chapter addresses the methodological approach taken in order to study the geographies of colour. As the title of this chapter suggests, the first part of this chapter outlines some of the issues that problematise studying colour and, in particular, researching the complex relationship between colour and emotion. Reflecting on these approaches, I will explain how this has informed my epistemological approach and enlivened a geographical account of colour. In the second part of this chapter, I will discuss how my research focus and engagements developed, and introduce the research questions and methodologies that inform the three empirical chapters. In the third part of this chapter, I provide a research audit trail, tracing the type and quantity of information that was gathered over the course of the research, whom I engaged with and how I analysed this information in order to formulate conclusions. This chapter comes to a close with a critical reflection of the research process itself.

A grey area

Colour is well known for being a highly problematic concept. Philosopher J.J. Gibson described it as “one of the worst muddles in the history of science.”¹⁷⁷ Although

¹⁷⁷ Gibson, J.J. (1968) cited in Malcolm, B. (1991). How Pictures Look. In: Knowles, D. and Skorupski, J., eds., (1993) *Virtue and Taste: Essays on Politics, Ethics and Aesthetics: in memory of Flint Schier*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 154-175.

research on colour and the emotions spans a period of more than a century, it is blemished with conceptual and methodological weaknesses. The last 50 years of academic writing in particular has provided a plethora of cautionary case studies of issues raised when studying colour, often employing “a method of establishing an exact relationship between interior sensory experience and events in the world.”¹⁷⁸ In one summary of 40 studies of colour and human behaviour, between 1964 and 2011, 43% of the studies were conducted in ‘made up’ environments, with most contexts appearing in offices or working areas.¹⁷⁹ From inadequate specifications or controls of colour stimuli, to something as simple as poor lighting conditions, rudimentary measuring techniques and trouble identifying and describing emotion, studies of colour’s effect on the body have failed to provide a thorough enough analysis on the relationships between colour and affect. Approaching colour from a geographical perspective is not intended as a device to alleviate and ignore these flaws, which are - methodologically at least - embedded in quantitative and positivist scientific practice. In their own ways, the lens through which colour is viewed is tinted in a different shade to mine. Instead, I argue that taking a different viewpoint enables me to examine colour from more imaginative sources, texts, forms and practices that elude the laboratory, it allows me to consider where exactly the problems are with language, rather than simply acknowledge that describing colour and emotion can be incredibly complicated, and as such is difficult to truly measure. Engaging with an ethnographic framework, one that places experiences, interactions and culture at the core of knowledge production, enables me to attend to these complex issues, and critically question these essentialised world views on colour, knowledge and emotion through a fresh geographical perspective.

As it has been made clear in Chapter 1, there has been no geographical research into the practices of colour. Given cultural geography’s interest in material, performance, emotion and practice, it is surprising that colour has not been considered in the same way that, for example, light and urban illumination has, particularly considering their conceptual similarities.¹⁸⁰ Furthermore, where colour in

¹⁷⁸ Carry, J. (1990) *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

¹⁷⁹ Jalil, N. A., Yunus, R. and Said, N. (2012) Environmental Colour Impact upon Human Behaviour: A review. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 35, pp. 54-62.

¹⁸⁰ Tim Edensor’s work on light and festivals in particular has gained momentum in cultural geography. See Edensor, T. (2012) Illuminated atmospheres: anticipating and reproducing the flow of affective experience in Blackpool. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. 30(6), pp. 1103–22; Edensor, T. (2013) Re-connecting with darkness: experiencing landscapes and sites of gloom. *Social and Cultural*

architectural studies is a flourishing field of research, architectural geographies seem to have eschewed consideration of colour, despite calls for architectural geography to think more deeply about emotion and colour's close relationship to feeling.¹⁸¹ This might signal a wider relegation of colour as secondary and superficial, or a reticence for academic engagements with it, particularly in the geographic context of lived space and place.

Since colour does not technically 'belong' to any one discipline, having roots in a range of different subject matters and permeating diverse disciplinary worlds, there are undoubtedly many ways to study colour, different angles to engage with it and endless conclusions that could be made. In many ways, colour sits at an awkward intersection between a positivist scientific model of colour, the idiographic and the post-positivist, constructionist way of seeing colour where we each construct a view of the world based on our own perceptions of it, shaped by culture, history, class and taste. Colour's chequered past, steeped in colonial and class tensions makes the study of colour both incredibly tricky, sometimes muddy, but for me at least, fascinating.

The methodological questions that are raised through pre-existing approaches to colour, coupled with cultural geography's particular affinity to practice, emotion and the body, enlivens a geographical account of colour. My methodological approach attends to, and embraces the multiplicities, complexities and emotional dimensions of colour, working with some of the *in situ* practices, performances and processes behind it. In the section that follows, I will discuss the development of a research design and the core research questions that have enabled my research to come to life.

Approach

The overall conception and practical consideration of this research has been broadly framed by theoretical and methodological gaps, particularly by addressing the geographies of colour as a qualitative area of social enquiry rather than adhering to the existing positivist traditions of colour psychology and science, causal relationships and symbolic representation. Instead, in order to obtain a richer engagement with colour

Geography. 14(4), pp. 446–65; and Edensor, T. (2014) The gloomy city: rethinking the relation between light and dark. *Urban Studies*. 52(3), pp. 422–438.

¹⁸¹Lees, L. & Baxter, R. (2011) A 'building event' of fear: thinking through the geography of architecture. *Social & Cultural Geography*. 12 (2). pp. 107–122.

and practice, this research takes a multi-method and post-positivist approach to attend to the materialities, multiplicities and mutability of colour.

This research has been designed using a pragmatic, inductive approach that takes colour and practice as its methodological focus. Collecting and analysing the data generated in this research involved a grounded theory approach, which allowed for an iterative examination to explore the narratives which helped me clearly explain *why* colour is so important. Given my particular interest in experience, the research framework is inspired by the phenomenological tradition. Phenomenology's stress on the character of human experience enables me to gather a range of insights and experiences that allow me to reflect on lifeworlds, knowledge and the sensory nature of colour. The intuitive idea of colour in phenomenology has a long and productive history, too. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's work on perception is an influential and productive part of the experiential dimension of colour that has shaped the strong experiential, corporeal and sensory grip of the research. Furthermore, as the thesis sharpens the focus on bodily practices in Chapter 5, the importance of the being in the world invokes phenomenology as illuminating social colour practice since it considers colour as embodied.

Initial reflections

At its core, the research interrogates practice. Part of this decision is not only due to the range, volume and velocity of bold architectures, colour initiatives in the urban and social landscape, or translations of cultural traditions in London, but the intertwining of practice and emotion that I seek to explore. Following Reckwitz, practices consist of specific ways of doing or saying things, such as working, or consuming and as such, are inter-subjective by nature, deeming them *social* practices.¹⁸² This also includes understanding, knowing how to use things and states of emotion.¹⁸³ Emotions themselves have an intricate relationship with practice. Philosopher Charles Taylor stressed that our "actions are ordinarily characterised by the purpose sought and explained by desires, feelings and emotions."¹⁸⁴ Broadly speaking, the focus on *practice*

¹⁸² Reckwitz, A. (2002) Towards a theory of social practices. A development in culturalist theorizing. *European Journal of Social Theory*. 5(2), pp. 243-263.

¹⁸³ Ibid: 249-250.

¹⁸⁴ Taylor, C. (1971) Interpretation and the sciences of Man. *The Review of Metaphysics*. 25(1), pp. 3-51.

and emotions underpins the overall thesis, and through examining these two ideas in conjunction with one another, the examination of practice is an entry into the emotional dimension of geography, colour and the body. Taking a practice based approach enables me to examine key concerns around situated knowledge(s), the body, emotions and the interstitial spaces between through my own engagement with colour, whilst still enabling me to examine the language, discourses and grammar used by practitioners to describe their own work. At the heart of this research is a critical reflection on the claims about the beneficial and positive value colour can impart on bodies and space. Over a range of different practices, urban and social transformations are often framed through an engagement with colour. Take for example the transformation of Tirana, Albania, introduced at the beginning of the thesis. The presentation of colour as a key part of improvement strategies in urban space is peppered with discourses around its use, drawn from a range of different perspectives that often cross between artistic and scientific knowledges, emerging in books, guides, or through conversation. Often, too, as I have discussed in the previous Chapter, there is no clear empirical link to this causality. Colour's positive benefit has, over time, become essentialised, and spurred my interest in a greater critical engagement with the emotional knowledges and discourse that prevail in the discussion of colour. From this observation, it became clear that the languages, grammar and discourses of the practitioners of colour would provide a rich insight into the complex negotiation of colour use and its perceived impact.

Following this lead has provoked me to research in greater detail the spaces of these colourful interventions and who in particular they sought to engage. One of the key ideas that emerged from the example of Tirana was its impact on *communities*. The views of local people were often captured and made visible through growing online platforms that spanned blogs, news stories, twitter and Facebook. A particularly influential case study which drew me into the community spaces I investigate in Chapter 4 was the transformation of a village slum in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where the two Western architects Haas and Hahn trained local people to become painters and brought the neighbourhood together to create a colourful visual intervention. "Turning public urban spaces and deprived places into artworks of monumental size" was seen as enabling "opportunities to locals, while making their community a nicer place to live...unlock local potential, boost pride, self esteem and send a positive message to the outside world" engaged with the essentialist, transformative tropes and knowledges that

colour circulates.¹⁸⁵ I was therefore interested to look at projects that engaged with colour, the local community and urban transformation in greater detail, devising an ethnographic framework that would enable me to study and engage directly with the communities and spaces that are part of these practices. Given the popularity and momentum gathered by the Haas and Hahn idea across the digital and visual arena, similar community colouring projects began to emerge. The Dulux *Let's Colour* project, having also visited Brazil, announced a similar initiative in the UK. Their use of a similar transformative language to the Haas and Hahn project in Rio sparked my curiosity about the ways in which community colouring projects become visible in the context of the UK, particularly given the political climate of localism that sharpens the focus on community engagement. The voluntary nature of the work at hand also presented itself as an opportunity to engage with research sites in greater detail and give a participatory ethnographic perspective on their development, offering a greater richness to my engagement with the research. Unlike the favela project in Brazil which was based in notoriously dangerous research sites, engaging with local projects in the UK was not complicated by language barriers or considerable ethical concerns. Engaging with the London projects also enabled me to compliment the expanding larger scale regeneration work as the city seeks to accommodate an increasingly urbanised population. Importantly for the methodological approach to the research, it also presented itself an opportunity to undertake a participatory ethnography to reveal the richness of community engagement and the work that it involves.

While these examples all traverse architectural or urban landscapes, the persistence of emotion in the understanding of colour centres the body in our understanding of colour. From the larger scale of the city, to the micro scale of the body, the interactions, sensations and emotions presented through an engagement with colour enables me to gain a deeper understanding of the complexity of situated corporeal knowledges, embodied experience and feelings. As I have demonstrated in Chapter 1, a geographical interest in the body has grown significantly and is particularly crucial in our understanding of emotion, and has been central to my investigation. Where an engagement with the community colouring project in Chapter 4 gave me a flavour of the emotional, embodied work involved in colouring, in practice, I realised that I needed to engage more specifically with the emotional in my research. Prompted by this, the final part of the thesis focuses on the nuances of colour and emotion from

¹⁸⁵ Favela Painting Foundation (2017) *Favela Painting*. Available from: <http://www.favelapainting.com> [Accessed Feb 9th 2017].

a unique perspective guided by the ethnographic tradition of participation and observation that allowed me to get closer to my research and explore colour and emotions more carefully. In order to explore this, I chose to engage with the proliferation of events using coloured powder, including the popular *The Color Run*, which, as an example, places happiness at the centre of its experience; a positive emotion that runs through both regeneration improvements and community painting initiatives. Rather than just acknowledge that happiness is present, I wanted to understand *why* happiness and *how* happiness unfolds. As I have traced in Chapter 1, colour and emotion is complicated and little understood. Given cultural geography's emotional turn and recent work on affect, atmosphere and experience, a geographical approach enables me to take space and emotion more seriously and attend to how emotions are performed, reproduced and circulated.

Although this tripartite could be linked tenuously on one level as being simply “urban” examples, there is a compelling connecting thread pulling these three strands of research together. In their unique ways, these cases are all vivid examples of how colour is negotiated, perceived and expected to perform *repair*. From the urban repair of regeneration after economic depression, to the repair of bodies through the considered application of colour in the interior space of the hospital, the community repairs of derelict neighbourhood spaces and the cohesive, collective repairs enacted in colour events, these transformations are uniquely framed by colour.

“Why don’t you tell me? You’re the expert!”

Methodological approach and research challenges

Human geography has come a long way since the methodological conservatism Alan Latham described in 2003.¹⁸⁶ The thesis that follows is a culmination of a range of observations, conversations, meetings and encounters, from the hammocks of a social area in an architectural practice, to a paint spattered kerb outside the east London mural I helped paint, to a Nando’s in Slough. My methodological toolkit has blended a wide palette of social scientific methods, largely ethnographic and participatory. For

¹⁸⁶ Latham, A. (2003) Research, performance, and doing human geography: some reflections on the diary-photograph, diary-interview method. *Environment and Planning A*. 35(11), pp. 1993–2017.

the main part, most of the fieldwork was conducted over a fourteen-month period between August 2013 and October 2014. In the next section, I outline and justify the methods adopted and the challenges experienced in analysing practitioners' narratives and practices around colour.

Talking to architects

Data collection for the first empirical chapter, examining the claims made around colour use, came in the form of 20 semi-structured interviews with practitioners in urban design and architecture.¹⁸⁷ I interviewed a range of artists, project architects, colour consultants and developers (see fig 2.1) and examined a range of architectural brochures, colour schemes, press packs and a sample of the real life bricks and cladding used on some of the buildings. Architects were recruited from a widely cast net. While I had a strong sense of which practices embraced polychromy in their architectural design, rather than sort and decide upon 'colourful projects' myself, I took a different approach. Architects at practices who enjoyed using colour also enjoyed discussing colour in their work, and as such, were receptive and reactive to the emails I distributed inviting participation. These were the core practitioners that formed my interview sample.¹⁸⁸ During this recruitment and interviewing stage, and as the research developed, the multifarious nature of 'colour' and how practitioners understand this influenced the particular cases I focus on in this thesis. For instance, a thesis on colour might be populated with colourful examples. This is not strictly the case. Where I research the bright yellows and oranges brightening up Barking, I also spend a significant amount of time dedicated to studying a white hospital in Chapter 3 and painting a wall in charcoal grey and black in Chapter 4. As such, this thesis appreciates that chroma, hue and tone is not exclusive to primary, bold colours. Attending to the greys, blacks and whites, and the claims, knowledge and impact of colours such as these, features as much as their polychromatic counterparts.

¹⁸⁷ All interviews in the research were recorded, with permission, with a dictaphone for accuracy.

¹⁸⁸ In my initial email, I did not make it clear what I meant by colour - such as bold or bright, primary colours or striking colours - in order to invite an architectural interpretation of it. This method helped me to sift through how certain architects view colour. Architects that responded to my call for participation included those who had worked on an all black building in Southwark, a range of white hospitals, and a bronze building in central London, highlighting the diverse grammars of "colour in architecture."

During interviews, I recorded brief fieldnotes to highlight key ideas or phrases that emerged during interview. I made short summaries of the interviews for my own reference later when sorting and sifting through interview data, particularly to highlight either a follow up interview or to request another interview with a different practitioner at the same firm to gather more data. The architectural interviewing process took six months and stopped in July 2014, when I had reached saturation due to the repetition of responses gathered in my qualitative sampling, which triggered the first stage of data analysis.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim within a few days of interview and a coding process was used by hand to reveal patterns and themes and make the corpus of data easier to handle.¹⁸⁹ A discourse analysis of each transcript uncovered underlying patterns. Analysing discourse is useful in the assessment of key actors' claims since it "involves a set of assumptions concerning the constructive effects of language."¹⁹⁰ Although the core empirical concern of this research is colour, particular focus is given to "bodies"; not just human bodies, but bodies of discourse, knowledge and materials that make up our understanding of colour. The articulation of the discursive production of claims, as well as the ways these claims have shifted or evolved over time, provides a rich opportunity to excavate how these discourses produce "effects of truth."¹⁹¹ The most powerful discourses, in terms of their social effects, depend on assumptions and claims that their knowledge is true.¹⁹² By further researching discourses connected to the claims made around the effect of colour on the emotions, this research can further interrogate the basis on which these claims were made, or the 'regimes of truth'. Beyond the materiality of the words on the transcripts I analysed, recording data from interviews also meant being sensitive to the interview context. The books on the architects desks revealed significant detail about their architectural and colour knowledge, and at times, these books seemed to be staged on their desk, and ready for me before the interview so that they could show me the books they use.

Initially, I identified 21 codes within the architecture transcripts and data, and six key themes in the language used by the architects: life, regeneration, fear, positive emotion, greyness and knowledge. The first five themes signalled a description of colour as either mobilising energy into space, or using regeneration as a conduit to

¹⁸⁹ See Miles, M. and Huberman, A. (1994) *Qualitative data analysis: an expanded source book (2nd edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

¹⁹⁰ Phillips, N. and Hardy, C., (2002) *Discourse analysis: Investigating processes of social construction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. p. 5.

¹⁹¹ Rose, N. (2001) The politics of life itself. *Theory, Culture & Society*. 18(6), pp. 1-30.

¹⁹² Ibid: 14.

reinvigorate dull, lifeless space. The overwhelming majority of not only new projects, but new *regeneration* projects, shaped the texture of Chapter 3 and its focus on transfusion and life. Many of the sites describe having been ‘neglected’, lack of community spirit, with the resulting projects winning architectural awards for having ‘uplifted’ the site. In an Alford Hall Monaghan Morris architectural brochure I was given during an interview, one of the east London sites in Hackney was described as a “slightly forgotten piece of London, wedged between hip Shoreditch and gritty Haggerston ... from slum clearances to huge social housing and rebuilding, there have been no shortage of attempts to make the area good.”¹⁹³ The rapidly changing landscape of east London provided plenty of rich engagements with new, colourful buildings. It is unsurprising that most of my projects concentrated on the eastern outskirts of London, perhaps reflecting these developmental priorities.

Role	Practice	Interview date	Location	Duration (mins:secs)
Technical manager	Telford Homes	30/11/13	London	14:55
Project architect	MAKE	19/12/13	London	26:16
Project architect	AHMM	19/12/13	London	27:31
Project architect	Stock Woolstencroft	20/12/13	London	26:39
Founding partner	CZWG	28/02/14	London	22:07
Founding partner	Studio E	29/04/14	London	88:36
Colour consultant	n/a	01/05/14	London	72:11
Founding partner	Studio E	08/05/14	London	55:54
Project architect	Hawkins Brown	12/05/14	London	56:38
Project architect	AHMM	14/05/14	London	28:38
Artist	studiofink	19/05/14	London	38:58

¹⁹³ Taken from AHMM information pack on the Adelaide Wharf project.

Colour consultant	n/a	21/05/14	London	69:54
Colour consultant	artinsite	23/05/14	London	115:52
Project architect	Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners	10/06/14	London	37:03
Project architect	CZWG	13/06/14	London	43:31
Project architect	Gelder + Kitchen LLP	24/06/14	London	49:51
Project architect	Avanti Architects	27/06/14	London	31:43
Founding partner and project architect	dRMM	03/07/14	London	29:03
Project architect	Hopkins Architects	18/07/14	London	31:47

Fig: 2.1 Interviewees for Chapter 3.

The final theme, knowledge, emerged unexpectedly. As such, it prompted a second coding process, where a seventh theme became prominent, that of the involvement of artists. The emergence of this additional theme prompted an engagement with the role of other practitioners in the design process. From the analysis of the architectural interviews, it became clear over time that in the architectural design process colour is collaborative. Through this, Chapter 3 culminates with an in-depth discussion of the collaborative role artist's play and the expert knowledge they are seen to have in the delivery of colour schemes. Furthermore, the geographies of their use displayed a clear trend towards healthcare architecture, and coupled with the overall core thesis idea around repair, provided a rich new avenue to investigate the complexities of colour, the body and health which informed the development of Chapter 5. Prompted by the discovery of a health connection in my architectural research, Chapter 3 also includes an in-depth discourse analysis of healthcare design guides. These guides were selected as examples of 'best practice' and provided a useful lens through which to study the circulation of colour knowledge and examine the basis of this knowledge. Thinking

unknown in the field of architectural colour, and architects are not particularly familiar with cultural or architectural geography.¹⁹⁴ To further problematise this, colour is not always considered among the most important parts of the building –secondary to form – and as such it was not always an easy topic to talk about with many architects. My fieldnotes explore moments where one interviewee in particular made me feel incredibly uncomfortable for even posing a question on colour, despite the building being decorated in bright oranges, yellows and reds.¹⁹⁵

My intention behind interviewing architects was to not only have “a conversation with a purpose” but also to use the interview to understand *how* the meaning making process unfolds in the interview is as critical as apprehending *what* is substantively asked and conveyed.¹⁹⁶ The *hows* of interviewing refer to the “interactional, narrative procedures of knowledge production, not merely interview techniques.”¹⁹⁷ In questioning them about their colour use, guided by the research question, it came as a surprise to me that on many occasions *I* was located as an expert. On occasion a question was replayed back to me with the retort “you tell me - you’re the expert!” or “You sound like you have a sort of artist side” during a discussion of an urban industrial site. Negotiating my position as a PhD researcher gaining expertise *from* architects was a particular challenge. These reactions provided a useful insight, however, into architectural attitudes towards colour knowledge, suggesting that they were uncomfortable being held at a position of authority on the topic and instead, used my doctoral researcher label to brand me as one instead. Furthermore, there were occasions during the semi-structured interviews where practitioners struggled to find the words to describe what they meant. Unique and unintelligible words like “zhushing” or “bzing!” were used at times to give a sense of impact. For instance, Piers Gough, project architect at CZWG, described a regeneration idea he had as a way to “zhush” the place up. Even more so than the use of inventive words like these, architects in particular resorted to using a musical

¹⁹⁴ In trying to explain architectural geography, one architect thought I would be good at making room plans of new buildings due to the “excellent mapping skills I have.”

¹⁹⁵ Probably the most uncomfortable interview I have ever conducted involved an architect agreeing to meet with me, sitting stony faced in front of a lone table and refusing to answer my initial question about the design of a specific building he worked with. Instead, he said nothing, spreading out a range of brochures and press packs and responding “why cant you just look at the pictures in here and read the copy?”

¹⁹⁶ Webb, S. and Webb, B. (1932) *Methods of Social Study*. London: Longmans Green & Co.

¹⁹⁷ Holstein, J. and Gubrium, J. (1997) Active Interviewing. In: Silverman, D. (ed.) *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*. London: Sage. p. 14.

vocabulary to describe colour.¹⁹⁸ Colour was described as either loud or quiet, building to a crescendo, noisy, clashing, or producing harmony. As such, it involved needing further explanation, which often fell flat as they struggled to describe what they meant and instead, bought up images to visualise what they meant. On four occasions, architects used the back of their consent forms to draw interiors of buildings rather than describe them. During these instances, I was reminded of a sentiment once uttered by Bruno Taut around the trouble of talking about colour: “the poetry of colours is indescribable. I’m searching so hard for words, but words fail. One can simply look...and keep silent.”¹⁹⁹ The difficulty with language encouraged me to be a lot more open to creative interpretations of colour and sensitive to the way colour is discussed.²⁰⁰

Reflections on community painting

For us who are involved in research and the production of knowledge, it makes us think more critically and creatively about what kind of involvement we want with these communities and what kind of knowledge we construct. Perhaps we should also be painting with them rather than about them.²⁰¹

The second stage of the research used three techniques. The first stage involved semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders involved in different community painting initiatives to gather information about current, previous or upcoming projects (see fig 2.3). As with my architectural research, I transcribed and coded these interviews by hand to generate themes and patterns to examine in greater depth. Through conducting these interviews, I was given the details of an employee leading the *Let’s Colour* initiative at Dulux. After our initial interview, I obtained a range of documents including a list of upcoming *Let’s Colour* projects which he updated and sent to me at the end of each week, a Welcome Pack given to successful *Let’s Colour* community

¹⁹⁸ The connection between colour design and music is a slight tangent to this research, but to briefly connect this: Isaac Newton’s spectrum experiments were famously named as ‘seven hues’, an auspicious number derived from Descartes musical scales.

¹⁹⁹ McLachlan, F. (2012) *Architectural Colour in the Professional Palette*. London: Routledge. p. 64.

²⁰⁰ One architect, rather crudely, told me why he thinks some other architects struggle with description, telling me “you know most architects are dyslexic, right?”

²⁰¹ Miguel Imas, J. (2014) “Favela Painting: Building community, social change and emancipation through an OrgansparkZ/Art installation” *Favelas@LSE*. 22nd October 2014. Retrieved from: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/favelasatlse/2014/10/22/favela-painting/> [Accessed Feb 9th 2017].

painting project leaders, PowerPoint presentations, links to promotional films, blogs and other useful promotional material on the project. Crucially, I was put in contact with the PR agency in charge of managing the project, a company called Tangerine, based in Manchester. Contact with Tangerine gave me access to 535 nomination forms from the initiative in 2013, which formed part of the second set of techniques, a discourse analysis, focused on the “geographies of need.”

Through contact with Tangerine, I also obtained a list of the successful 2013 London projects that received funding. I contacted the project leaders and set up five focus groups with each group in order to better understand their motivations for applying and the spaces they nominated (see fig 2.4). The conversations were transcribed and coded. However, data from the focus groups repeated many of the same codes and insights gathered from the analysis of the semi structured interviews and documentation. The focus group meetings were overall a range of briefer encounters, offering little in the overall development of the thesis. Often, participants in could not remember basic details, or were unsure of certain aspects of the scheme or the spaces, such as the colour of the rooms before the change. This quandary suggested that my responses may not be accurate, which is problematic in itself. In terms of coding, the focus groups produced fewer and less varied codes. In one focus group with volunteers at Oakwood, a residency in suburban London for recovering substance abusers, responses ranged from descriptions of the environment before the *Let's Colour* initiative as ‘drab’ and ‘unwelcoming’. The repeated use of ‘drab’ and ‘dull’, to describe spaces prior to their Dulux intervention, and ‘uplifting’ or ‘bright’ after the change recurred throughout the focus groups. Echoing much of the analysis conducted in chapter 3, in addition to repeating findings from documentation and semi-structured interviews from Dulux and Tangerine PR, incorporating a specific section on the focus groups did not provide overly productive and useful data that opened up any particularly new avenues in the thesis. However, that is not to say that the focus groups were completely futile. Conducting the focus groups lead to me fortuitously gain access to Studio3Arts, where my participation in colouring the bare walls of the building is a significant feature of chapter 5. The mild amnesia, disinterest and lack of variety in responses from participants in many ways opens up another reading of these colour interventions as *fleeting* reparative practices; revitalisation as momentary, the reading of colour and change as temporal. In turn, this temporality

inspired the writing of the final part of the thesis, the conclusion, which draws together the patterns of temporality, colour and repair in the thesis.

The final technique, which forms a significant part of my analysis, was a participatory ethnography of an active community colouring project in August 2013. This practice stage of the research sought an active, embodied engagement with space, not only in the observation of the participants, but reflexively through my own engagement with colouring in order to develop "a promising field for further inquiry [and] of doing research."²⁰² During this study of practice, I employed a mobile 'participation-while-interviewing'²⁰³ technique to gather a greater sense of the feelings, motivations and emotions experienced by the other participants, questioning "the way the sensual world greets the sensual body and with the affective forces that are generated in such meetings."²⁰⁴

Within the social sciences, ethnography has come to refer to a broad set of practices through which scholars attempt to observe and interpret the cultural beliefs and practices of social groups by engaging them in some kind of interpersonal encounter. Traditionally, ethnography refers specifically to the task of the participant observer who "gathers data by participating in the daily life of the group or organisation he [sic] studies."²⁰⁵ The ethnographic part of understanding community painting initiatives sought to do just that, participating in the labour and love of producing a piece of coloured material, turning towards the practices and processes involved in making change happen. I was concerned that the community projects would be resistant to having outsider input into their projects, since I did not present myself as a community member. Dulux reassured me: "Let's put it this way. Think of the kind of person that would want to do a community project. They'll be nice people." In practice, I anticipated working with a large group of community members on a project, but this did not materialise. During my fieldwork period, there were only four successful projects planned. Two of these projects happened without my knowledge, being completed in less than 48 hours. In the case of the other two, one involved working with under 16s which was against my ethical agreement for the research, and

²⁰² Everts, J. and Wagner, L. (2012) Guest Editorial: Practicing Emotions. *Emotion, Space and Society*. 5(3) pp. 174-176.

²⁰³ Bærenholdt, J. O., Haldrup, M., Larsen, J. and Urry, J. (2004) *Performing Tourist Places*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

²⁰⁴ Highmore, B. (2009) A sideboard manifesto: design culture in an artificial world. In: Highmore, B. (ed). *The Design Culture Reader*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 1-12.

²⁰⁵ Becker, H. S. (1958) Problems of inference and proof in participant observation. *American Sociological Review*, 23(6), pp. 652-660.

the other was scheduled in a private space for elite ice skaters, and as such, my access was restricted. In all cases, though, my involvement in “helping out” was warmly received, and I was repeatedly told on many occasions how they could “really do with an extra pair of hands.” Following on in this vein, my ethnographic involvement with the community painting project I studied happened very suddenly. I had scheduled a focus group with a successful *Let’s Colour* team from the previous year, and during the interview, it emerged that they had not actually finished the project and were planning on continuing it the next day. Given the short notice, and fortuitousness of me being there the day before, enabled me to be involved in the continuation of the project. I spent four days between 23rd July 2014 and 30th July 2014 working on the development of the mural that features in Chapter 4, conducting informal interviews with other community members and the artist on site, Maria, working with me, as well as completing 23 pages of fieldnotes recording my involvement, conversations at lunch, tea and various ice cream breaks, paying close attention to my own feelings and impressions in order to record the emotionality of my field experience.

Many of these methodological reflections informed the theoretical discussions that I covered not only in Chapter 4 but also in Chapter 5, where the sense of embodied labour I experienced was most strongly felt. The actual ‘work’ of being involved in community initiatives blurred the boundary between researcher, research and labour. The work of conducting research was exhausting. Participating in the ethnography I engaged with enabled me to study ‘bodies at work’ – particularly my own – and take seriously the creativity of embodied work practices relatively absent in geography.²⁰⁶

Mixing bodies and matter: Researching colour in ludic experiences

Being sensitive to the minutiae of colour, materiality and the body in attending to the final research question demanded a more in depth ethnographic engagement and a critical reflection on the way humans interact with coloured space. Chapter 5’s ethnographic approach sought to capture and present the sensations, emotions and

²⁰⁶ McMorran, C. (2012) Practicing workplace geographies: embodied labour as method in human geography. *Area*. 44(4), pp. 489-495.

performances at colour based events. Addressing the experiential dimensions of colour and practice, the final empirical chapter expands on the necessity to give greater consideration to the complex making of emotion in colour events. I conducted three interviews with event organisers from *The Color Run*, *Run or Dye* and the *Festival of Colours* (see fig 2.5). These three events all centralised *gulal*, the coloured powder used to celebrate the ancient Holi festival. After transcribing and coding the interviews, key themes around happiness, playfulness and building relationships emerged. Importantly, it became clear that *interactions* assisted in the development of these three themes. People mixing together and being part of the experience was a key factor in the enabling of emotion. As such, it was crucial to examine these interactions to gather a richer insight into these particular practices.

In order to research these ludic experiences, I took a more reflexive approach to the embodied knowledge produced during fieldwork, particularly in order to examine the orchestration of emotional performances that feature heavily in Chapter 5. My qualitative exploration combined participant observation, participation and autoethnography. I attended my first *Color Run* on the 1st June 2014. This ethnography included 6 hours of observation and participation as an event volunteer within a colour throw zone. I took 29 pages of fieldnotes, many of which were completed in greater detail after the event due to the difficulty writing while colour was falling on the pages of my notebook.²⁰⁷ The *Festival of Colours* ethnography on the 29th July 2014 included 10 hours of observation, including informal conversations with participants. The participatory autoethnography, *Run or Dye*, on 27th September 2014 event included full participation in the race, paying particular attention to emotional and embodied geographies. These events were selected due to the affective and vitalist promises apparent in their advertising campaigns, selling the idea of the ‘Happiest 5k’ in the case of *The Color Run*, *Run or Dye*’s connection to the celebratory fun of the ancient Holi festival, and the *Festival of Colours* wider ‘Be Happy’ tour.

Colour is a sensory quality that has to be experienced and as such, presenting this information can often be a challenge. Although sensory happenings can never be directly translated through language and words, I employed a detailed description technique in order to creatively and expressively recite the story of what happened and

²⁰⁷ The coloured powder stayed on my notebook for a number of months after the event.

my own body sensations and feelings through writing.²⁰⁸ Inspired by *Writing Urban Space* and drawing on a background in screenwriting, I used imaginative writing techniques to engage with and transform the urban spaces of my research.²⁰⁹ While I took photographs to give a visual impression of the events, I present my methodological writing with as much expression and detail. Initial notes were brief, shorthand ‘inscriptions’ which were built upon and elaborated into narrative descriptions fit for academic writing. Given the sheer volume of writing that featured in this research, it is unsurprising that my fieldnote diary became a treasured part of my methodological kit.²¹⁰ Presenting my observations and trying to convey the richness of the encounters I not only observed, but on occasions, co-produced and experienced first hand, prompted an engagement of ethnographic “thick description.”²¹¹ Rather than paraphrase or include short, brief sections of participant observation research in the empirical chapters, where it was relevant I include longer pieces of ethnographic prose, getting the reader as close as I can to ‘being there’. The environments I was in felt unique, and conveying this through written form demanded a degree of creative description. This is not to say the ethnographic writing I employed accurately re-imagined the spaces I was in; after all, fieldnotes are fashioned, fictional constructions rather than objective translations of events.²¹² Ethnographic findings are not “realities” extracted from the field, rather they are intersubjective truths negotiated out of an unfolding, iterative practice.²¹³ In many ways we are “all ethnographers” as we move from “outsider to insider as one comprehends the world from the insiders point of view.”²¹⁴ The writing I employed was used as a technique to describe the richness of my environments and as a strategy to conjure up a sense of place through a more vivid impression of the research sites.

²⁰⁸ See Ducey, A. (2007) More than a job: meaning, affect, and training health care workers. In: Clough, P. and Halley, J. (eds.) (2007) *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*. London: Duke University Press. pp. 187-208.

²⁰⁹ Bell, L. and Goodwin, G. (2012) *Writing Urban Space*. Winchester: Zero Books.

²¹⁰ From the start of the research in 2012 to submitting this thesis, I have filled almost 5 journals of research reflections, totalling around 900 pages of notes.

²¹¹ Ley, D. (1998) Classics in Human Geography revisited: Ley, D. 1974. *The Black Inner City as Frontier Outpost*: author’s response. *Progress in Human Geography*, 24(2), pp. 268-271.

²¹² Geertz, C. (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

²¹³ Parr, H. (2001) Negotiating different ethnographic contexts and building geographical knowledges: empirical examples from mental health research. In: Limb, M. and Dwyer, C. (eds) (2001) *Qualitative Methodologies for Geographers: Issues and Debates*. London: Arnold, pp. 181-95.

²¹⁴ Herbert, S. (2000) For ethnography. *Progress in Human Geography*. 24(4), pp. 550-568.

Role	Company	Interview date	Location	Duration (mins:secs)
Marketing and Communications	Trees for Cities	12/11/14	Kennington, London	21:54
Marketing and Communications	Trees for Cities	12/12/14	Kennington, London	36:00
Artist	On Blue Trees project (Trees for Cities)	13/12/14	Skype (Australia)	27:04
Manager	Community RePaint	06/03/14	Bristol	68:48
Let's Colour	Dulux	20/05/14	Slough	80:00
Let's Colour	Dulux	12/06/14	Slough	51:50
Volunteer event organiser	Shuffle Festival	17/07/14	Mile End, London	21:44
Volunteer project leader: Studio3 Arts (Let's Colour grant winner)	Community group	22/07/14	Barking, London	32:10

Fig 2.3 Interviewees for Chapter 4.

Role	Company	Interview date	Location	Duration (mins:secs)
Focus group with volunteers and project leader	Community group	18/06/14	Reigate, Greater London	39:48
Focus group with volunteers and project leader	Sports club	18/06/14	Isle of Dogs, London	10:40
Focus group with volunteers and project leader	Sports club	09/07/14	Watford, Greater London	15:42
Focus group with volunteers and project leader	Nursery	15/07/14	Canning Town, London	36:34
Volunteer project leader: Let's Colour 2013	Sports Club	16/07/14	Watford, Greater London	15:05

Fig 2.4 Focus groups, used for concept development in Chapter 4.

Role	Company	Interview date	Location	Duration (mins:secs)
Marketing and sales: The Color Run	Dulux	12/06/14	Slough	51:50
Event organiser	Festival of Colours	27/06/14	Stratford, London	15:20
Event organiser & marketing	Run or Dye	11/07/14	Hammersmith, London	39:42

Fig 2.5 Interviewees for Chapter 5.

In the words of J. Fraser Hart in 1981, “I suspect most good geography of any stripe, begins by looking.”²¹⁵ In-situ interactions allow the researcher, in the ethnographic tradition, to witness an array of emotional and embodied practices as they are experienced and performed by those involved... [and they] allow these insights to be complemented by the researcher’s own experiences of the same situation.”²¹⁶ The study and experience of ‘bodies at work’ during my participation in all three ethnographic sites demanded a degree of “rolling up ones sleeves” and conducting research *through* the body.²¹⁷ This participatory approach to understanding embodied labour as part of the making of ludic events allowed me to take more seriously the work of embodied practices. There is also much to be learned about cultural labour beyond the verbal, something in the act of doing that surpasses our capacity to explain. Employing an embodied ethnography enabled me to get close to the feeling, reading and making of bodies in space.²¹⁸ Doing geography with feeling was a lively counterpoint to the “academic vampirism” that has been criticised for draining the lifeblood of interactions.²¹⁹ Being sensitive to these interactions formed a crucial part in understanding the complex making of happiness. In contrast, thinking affectively about these interactions pays closer attention to the impulses, feelings and instinctive

²¹⁵ McDonald, F. (2011) Visuality. In: Gregory, D. and Castree, N. (eds) (2011) *Human Geography*. London: Sage.

²¹⁶ Anderson, J. and Jones, K. (2009) The difference that place makes to methodology: uncovering the ‘lived space’ of young people’s spatial practices. *Children’s Geographies*. 7(3), pp. 291-303.

²¹⁷ McMorran, C. (2012) Practicing workplace geographies: embodied labour as method in human geography. *Area*. 44(4), p. 490.

²¹⁸ Parr, H. (2001) Feeling, reading and making bodies in space. *Geographical Review*, 91(1-2), pp. 158-167.

²¹⁹ Dewsbury, J.D., Harrison, P., Rose, M. and Wylie, J. (2002) Enacting geographies. *Geoforum*. 33(4), pp. 437-440.

responses that can offer a more nuanced account of social reality.²²⁰ The emotions and feelings that derive from the ethnographic approach I took is not intended to create an account that solely describes my position in the field, but instead is a mechanism that allows me to highlight how my own emotions and actions illuminate my core argument, and provides a deeper insight into experience.

Using images

Swathes of visually stimulating imagery of colourful cities populate the digital landscape. From articles in newspapers, popular BuzzFeed articles, to tourist pages, the visual allure of colour is enchanting.²²¹ As such, the images in this thesis are used as a key part of the architecture of my discussion. Rather than using visual methods to analyse imagery, photos from the ethnographic vignettes in this thesis form a key part of the expressions of my experience in these sites. While I acknowledge it is important to represent visually the spaces that form key parts of my analysis, particularly owing to the trouble colour has with linguistic possession, the images I use are intended to bring the reader closer to the scenes I describe. Images were used to highlight the affective power of colour. I use imagery to either aid in recreating a sense of the places I in this thesis, or, particularly in chapters 4 and even more so in 5, to aid in not only the storytelling of ethnography, but also to highlight feelings, experiences and the textures of places, and palpability of colour. Much of this approach is inspired by the work of geographer and photographer Mia Hunt, whose photographic work depicts the rich emotional and atmospheric qualities of urban spaces.²²²

Having discussed the methodological framework of this research, I now turn to the first of my three empirical chapters to examine the geographies of knowledge, healing and iterations of repair in colour design in architecture.

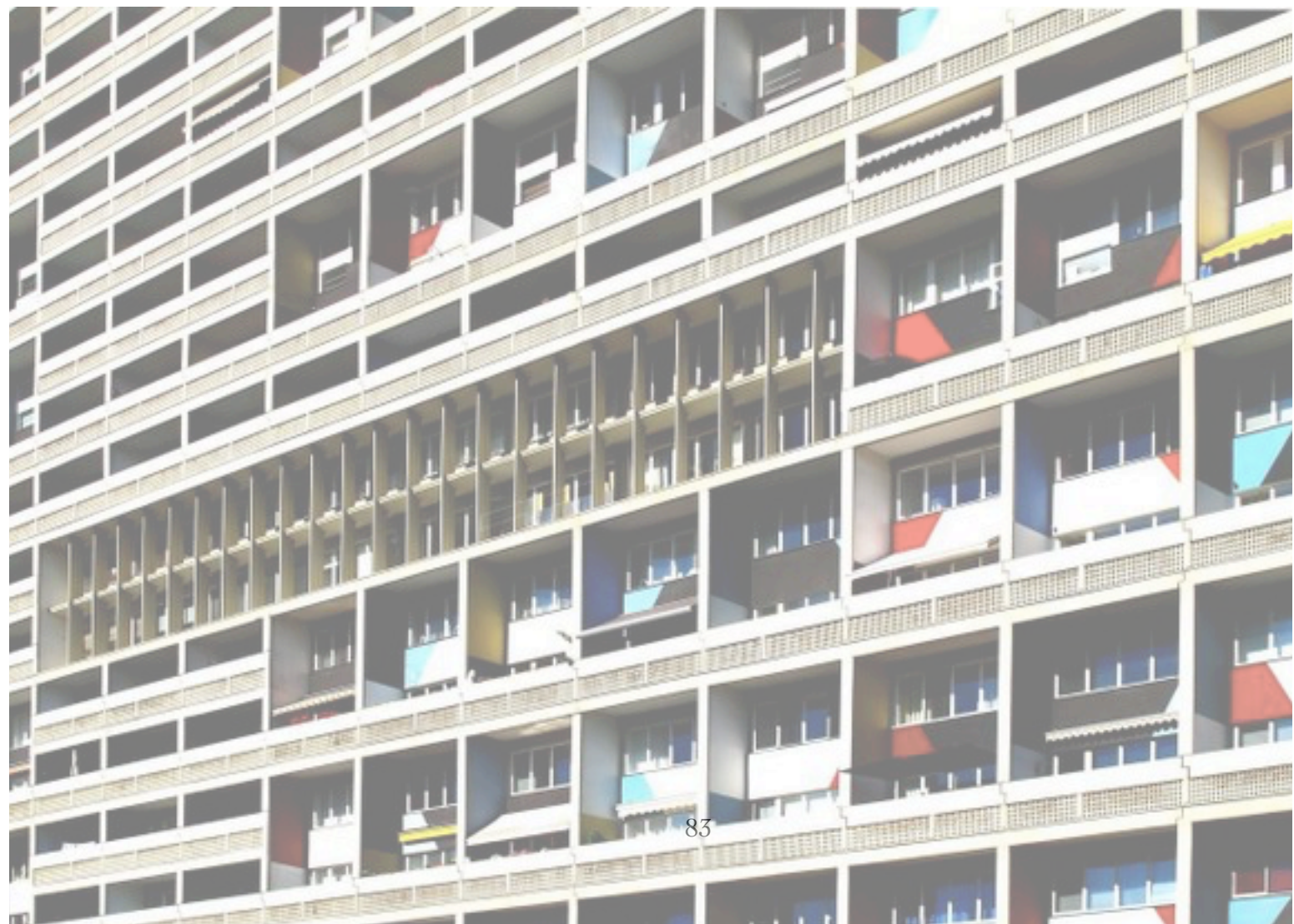
²²⁰ Anderson, B. (2006) Becoming and being hopeful: towards a theory of affect. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. 24(5). pp. 733-752.

²²¹For example, see “The Most Colourful Cities in the World”: <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/gallery/2016/jan/19/most-colourful-cities-neighbourhoods-world-in-pictures>; “The world’s most colourful places”: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/galleries/The-worlds-most-colourful-cities/> and “The 24 Most Colourful Cities in the World”: <https://www.buzzfeed.com/behrr/the-24-most-colorful-cities-in-the-world> [all accessed Feb 9th 2017].

²²² See Hunt, M. (2014) Urban photography/cultural geography: spaces, objects, events. *Geography Compass*, 8(3), pp. 151-168.

Chapter 3

Colour in the architectural imagination



The story of colour in modern architecture is a story of failure; not for colour,
but for architecture.²²³

For decades, modern architectural colour has been characterised by what art historian David Batchelor calls *chromophobia*. This chromophobia – a colour refusal – is not only part of the story of modern architecture’s resistance to colour, but symptomatic of the wider cultural and intellectual Western thought.²²⁴ Generations of philosophers, modern artists, art-historians and architects have kept this prejudice alive.²²⁵ White in the modernist aesthetic is hygienic, orderly and clean. Colour, on the other hand, stood for chaos.

However, the emergence of the chaos known as colour, to a certain extent at least, can be mapped. Curiously, when modernist characteristics like order and harmony are disturbed, colour emerges in the urban landscape. Bruno Taut, Adolph Behne and Walter Gropius’ German movement *Call to Colourful Building* in 1919, promoting colour as a means to bring cheer to the dilapidated, nineteenth-century stuccoed buildings, peaked shortly after the impact of the First World War. In 2000, when mayor Edi Rama spoke of colouring Tirana, the city described as “the greyist, dustiest, most hopeless city ever imagined” the riots of the Albanian Rebellion three years earlier left the Albanian landscape in disarray.²²⁶ Even AkzoNobel’s ColourFutures programme, an extensive colour forecasting directory which identifies emerging social, economic and design trends around the world by going as far as collecting data on the colour of the items we throw away, showed that in the UK a primary, bright, uplifting palette jumped in the 2000s²²⁷ following a heavy recession.²²⁸

²²³ Kane, C. (2015) Broken colour in a modern world: chromatic failures in purist art and architecture. *Journal of the International Colour Association*. 14, p. 2.

²²⁴ Batchelor, D. (2000) *Chromophobia*. London: Reaktion books.

²²⁵ Modern art and architecture refers to the art, architecture, and literature produced at the end of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. It refers to a style whereas the “modern era” refers to a broader historical period that, arguably, began with the Renaissance and continues through the present.

²²⁶ Edi Rama, quoted speaking at TEDxThessaloniki, May 2012. See https://www.ted.com/talks/edi_rama_take_back_your_city_with_paint [Accessed 13 December 2016]

²²⁷ Lisa Pilley, Senior colour designer at Dulux, speaking at the *Building* colour debate, London, 28th November 2014. See also <https://www.dulux.co.uk/en/articles/2016-colour-trend-research> [Accessed 13 December 2016].

²²⁸ In 2017, ColorFutures announced the Color of the Year – *Denim Drift* – which indicates a gradual shift away from the brightness around the recession. In contrast, *Denim Drift*, a “soft, grayish blue, perfectly suits the times we live in” described the darker shades as “dramatic and moody.” See <https://www.akzonobel.com/for-media/media-releases-and-features/akzonobel-unveils-color-year-2017> [Accessed September 1 2017]

Chromatic interventions such as these are entangled with familiar tropes around improving the urban, social and material fabric and the effect of colour. In particular, the complex relationship between colour and the body exposes a particular similarity, where colour is used to treat bodies. Examining the history of colour in certain architectures reveals a polemic in the design of healthcare spaces, where there is an increased sensitivity to the making of these healing environments. As a result of this turn to designing healthy environments, a surge of guides, reports and programmes prioritise the judicious use of colour in these settings in order to create the ideal hospital environments. These reports, such as NHS funded *Colour and Lighting in Healthcare Environment* (2004) guide and the King's Fund *Enhancing the Healing Environment Programme* (2010), are a response to the esoteric, uncontrollable nature of colour, offering direction and advice to practitioners working in these arenas to facilitate a sensitive design approach. In an era where colour education has been dispensed with and dropped from the core curriculum of architecture schools, colour sits in theoretical limbo between planning and design and as a result, colour studies has "fallen between stools."²²⁹ The denigrated status of colour in architectural education has in part provoked a surge in interdisciplinary collaboration with artists on buildings, who, unlike their architectural allies, still have a tradition of colour theory education. Armed with a competency justifying their designs to stakeholders and their artistic knowledge to rightly deploy colour, artist collaborators have forged a new opportunity in architectural practice through their valuable expert colour knowledge. These practitioners, called colour consultants, respond to architectural design in a clinical manner: entering a space, diagnosing a problem, and applying their treatment.

In their unique ways, these cases are all vivid examples of how colour is negotiated, perceived and expected to perform repair. From the urban repair of cities under siege from riots, war, or economic depression, to the repair of bodies through the considered application of colour in the hospital, these transformations are uniquely framed by colour.

This chapter examines the pursuit of a range of through urban, bodily and architectural repairs in three recent regeneration projects in London: Barking Central, the KPMG City Academy in Hackney and the Finchley Memorial Hospital. These architectures, set within different urban regeneration strategies, are rich conduits to examine repair; imagining 'regeneration' evokes a sense of revival. Taking a focus on

²²⁹ Jasper, A. (2015) Colour Theory. *Architectural Theory Review*. (19)2. p. 120.

the reproduction of particular ideas from architectural and artistic knowledges across different contexts, this chapter brings these different knowledges into dialogue with repair.

This chapter is framed in light of recent changes to colour training in architecture schools that has clouded architectural polychromy and considered in line with the role artistic knowledge plays in the colour design of buildings. I explore the translation of these different knowledges into architectural practice and the tensions around the multiple knowledges and ontological positions that practitioners take, or reject. A burst of interest in guides, reports and programmes on the ‘judicious’ use of colour in the healthcare environment in particular signals a focus of the value of practical, evidence based knowledge on colour. Responding to colour’s relationship to therapeutic design and the body, the third issue this chapter examines focuses on colour in the hospital environment as a particularly vivid example of how colour is practiced, structured and understood in healthcare spaces where the repairing of the body is a primary concern.

Bringing these claims, knowledge, logics and reports together, the fourth issue this chapter examines is how these constructs have contributed to the reproduction of expert knowledge. Sifting through the vast, problematic and ever shifting field of colour research, how do practitioners negotiate colour in their practice? In this final section, I explore the redevelopment of Finchley Memorial Hospital as an example where an artist, specialising in colour knowledge, has been commissioned to lead the colour design of the redevelopment. Through careful analysis of two guides which presume more formulaic approaches to colour design in the hospital, I explore the less prescriptive and more tacit, embodied knowledges presented by the colour consultant as expert.

The aim of this chapter is to respond to these questions around architectural and urban colour by examining discourses of repair within the claims made by practitioners. I will do this by examining two architectural projects in East London: the regeneration of Barking Central by Alford Hall Monaghan Morris and muf architects, and Studio E’s City Academy School in Hackney as an example of replacing a ‘failing’ school focusing on the role of both architect and artist. Positioning the first half of the chapter in one particular landscape of repair - regeneration - this project explores perceptions around colour’s function in urban spaces where revival is an integral part of the regeneration process. Through these practitioners’ accounts, I will discuss

reflections on the colour design process, from colour strategy and collaboration, to their understanding of colour's spatial agency and indications pertaining to colours' repair. Examining promotional architectural material, images, and through a range of interviews with practitioners working closely on the project, the opening section of the chapter brings colour and regeneration agendas into focus, responding to how these claims frame the project's colour design.

The analysis of this chapter has been crafted around four conceptualisations of repair: re-stitching, transfusion, filling and fixing. Re-stitching and transfusion both respond to the urban repairs presented in the case of the Barking Central and KPMG City Academy, Hackney, whilst filling and fixing respond to artistic knowledge through an examination of Barking Central and the Finchley Memorial Hospital. In the next section, I begin with a discussion of Alford Hall Monaghan Morris' Barking Central project, and the ways it works to re-stitch the historical, urban and architectural politics of repair.

Re-stitching

AHMM believe there's more to regeneration than simply building new houses... Barking Central demonstrates that the real key to city centre regeneration is in not throwing away old buildings, but knitting old and new together to breathe new life into...what had become something of a forgotten Thames Gateway backwater.²³⁰

Barking Central has "revitalised" Barking Town Centre. The £71million, mixed-use regeneration project was handed over to architectural practice AHMM in 2002, along with London collaborative muf architecture/art, and was completed in 2008.²³¹ The new centre is full of bright and buzzing multicolour, reinventing the heart of Baking "after years of neglect."²³² Delivered in two phases over nine years, the finished scheme "symbolises the regeneration of this London Gateway town."²³³

Barking, a suburban town in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham,

²³⁰ DCLG (2011) *Draft National Planning Policy Framework*. London: DCLG.

²³¹ Barking Town Centre was awarded the European Prize for Urban Public Space in 2008. See: <http://www.publicspace.org/en/works/e061-barking-town-square/prize:2008> [Retrieved Aug 9 2017]

²³² AHMM (2012) *Barking Central Information Pack*. London: Alford Hall Monaghan Morris, p. 7.

²³³ Ibid.

has a rich industrial history. Once home to a successful Ropeworks, Piano Factory and, perhaps most well known, the R Whites soft drinks factory, the historic, civic and industrial character of Barking emerged as key design drivers that AHMM used in order to regenerate Barking. The scheme comprises of seven new buildings, made up of over 500 residential apartments, a hotel, bike shed, nine retail units, a café, a new town square and an arboretum.²³⁴ Rope Works is situated above the new Barking Learning Centre, previously the town library. Flowing with greens and yellows, the outer elevations are clad in shimmering silver and animated with staggered balconies; green at the east, shading to yellow at the west. Piano Works (see fig 3.4), which sits next to the Rope Works, responds to its civic neighbours with a smooth skin of variegated orange, red and yellow cladding like a fiery scotch bonnet. Axe Street, hidden behind its towering neighbours, is a more monochromatic residential to contrast with the complex colours used in the neighbouring buildings. Bath House, named after the old Old Bath house that was used for town meetings, features an eight storey building set on a ground floor plinth defines the north side of the arboretum. Each long elevation is clad in smooth Ibstock Cheddar brick to give the building a “crisp, modern look.”²³⁵ A series of ‘cant’ bricks²³⁶ create a dappled effect, with bright yellow bucket balconies follow the colour strategy for the entire public space. The tallest piece, and most well known of all the Barking Central units, is the Lemonade building (see fig 3.1), named after the R Whites factory it replaces. Clad in a smooth grey brick that unites the civic buildings, the Lemonade building sits atop a ground floor commercial unit, decorated in brick elevations punctured with windows and balcony recesses, composed to provide a vertical and dynamic emphasis to the building. As the most recognizable building owing to its industrial history, the towering height of the Lemonade building is the bastion of Barking’s present day regeneration.²³⁷

When discussing the regeneration of Barking, AHMM referred to it as a type of “re-stitching.”²³⁸ Re-stitching, as one of the key themes underpinning the regeneration of Barking, has a distinctively reparative grammar. From re-stitching the urban fabric of Barking to extend the impact of the scheme beyond the edges of the

²³⁴ Ibid: 1.

²³⁵ Ibid: 35.

²³⁶ A ‘cant’ brick is a type of special shaped brick, designed to various shapes and dimensions to compliment and contrast the standard metric or imperial brick.

²³⁷ AHMM (2012) *Barking Central Information Pack*. London: Alford Hall Monaghan Morris, p. 7.

²³⁸ Ibid.

site, to establishing new public spaces as a civic setting for the Town Hall and Municipal Library, envisioning what re-stitching looks like conjures up imagery of patching up, fixing and putting back together, rather than the more destructive *tabulae rasae* of other urban regeneration schemes. This re-stitching, a sewing together of the old and the new, was a key feature in the design and masterplanning of Barking Central. Drawing heavily on the civic and industrial history of the site, the identities of many of the buildings were driven by the site-specific history of the area: the Lemonade building's name and the Rope Works colour scheme, for example, evoking the colours of the iconic R Whites can where other buildings respond to the Lemonade building and the seasonal colours of the new arboretum. This memorialisation most vividly manifests itself through colour as visual reminders of the past. Repairing through re-stitching the old and the new forges a connectivity to the past, retaining a sense of the spirit of the place or the identity of the site.

AHMM identified that developing a colour strategy for all buildings was “key to developing a new identity to the area”²³⁹ with the emphasis being made on “vivid colours to articulate elements of the buildings.”²⁴⁰ Pete Mayhew is one of the project architects at AHMM, involved in the development of Barking Central. He describes to me the architectural process behind colour and design, explaining that in many cases, colour in architecture has a particular value, rationale and unique quality and takes a considerable amount of time:

It's very easy to get a paint brush or whatever and slightly different now that we live in the digital age that you get your Pantone references and put it in Photoshop. But you have a very wide range of colours at your disposal. Infinite as an artist. When you go into the world of getting a building produced and built within budget, with time constraints, etc., that sometimes get slightly-- it has a different rationale. There's a set of colours out there that you can do. There's another set that you can do which costs extra money, and take extra time. There's a balance to be had there. But the starting point is the artistic colour, and getting the right colours.²⁴¹

Far from secondary in design, for Pete, colour is considered alongside form. “Getting the right colours” is integral, and places a particular emphasis on the colour design of architectural form in achieving something special. Despite the infinite choices

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Interview with Pete, AHMM. 19th December 2013.

available, there is a value structure in place that places financial and creative restrictions on colour. As such, the degree of freedom for the architect is limited to these temporal and economic restraints, as it was in the design of Barking Central:



Fig 3.1 The R Whites lemonade can next to the colours of the Rope Works building. Source: AHMM.

There's this gradation of greens that goes totally through from light to dark. In terms of the autumnal colours we did a similar process. Some of these are special, some of these are standard, because we were under a bit more budget pressure and a bit more hard hitting from the contractor.²⁴²

The project vision was welcomed by the council, too, and immediately compared it to an example of another project in Suffolk where the council there demanded “more colour” which was “surprising.” Pete notes that he was lucky Barking Council were able to see into and appreciate the essential elements of its identity:

I think [Barking Council] were quite happy to follow our kind of thinking. And

²⁴² Ibid.

they understood it, and they felt it was the right thing to be doing. They were actually really supporting of that.²⁴³



Fig 3.2 Existing Barking library and public realm. Source: AHMM

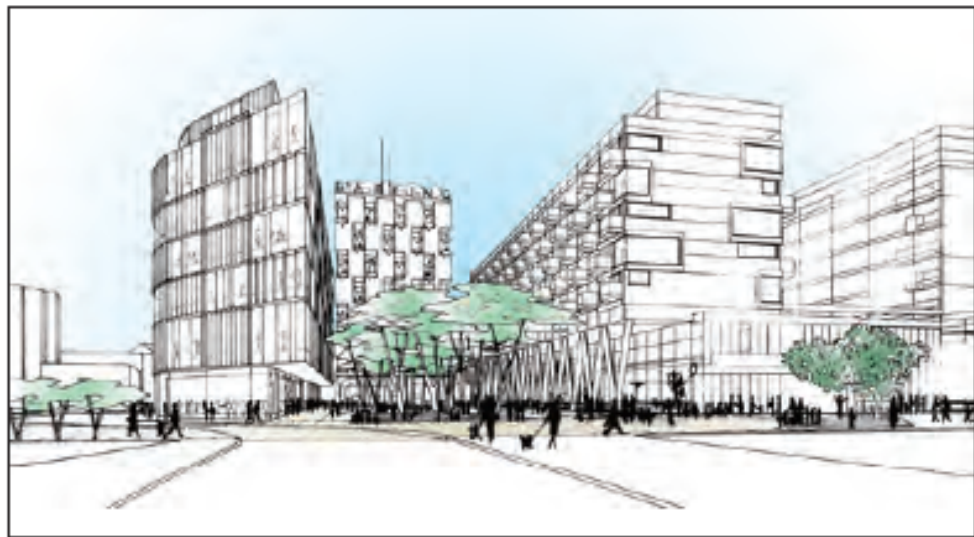


Fig 3.3 Barking Central, north perspective of arboretum from Town Square.

Source: AHMM

Reflecting on the process of colour design during the making of Barking Central and in the practice overall, he made clear that the practice used colour to assist in the purposeful storytelling of a building:

I was quite involved in that, which is a quite interesting, painful process [laughs] The practice, as you would probably see if you look at the website, has an interest in colour and in using colour in buildings. But not in a kind of- what would I say? A sort of forced, tacked on manner. So we like to be integral, have

²⁴³ Ibid.

a rationale and a story. In certain buildings adding a little bit of colour is a good thing, a warming welcoming thing.²⁴⁴

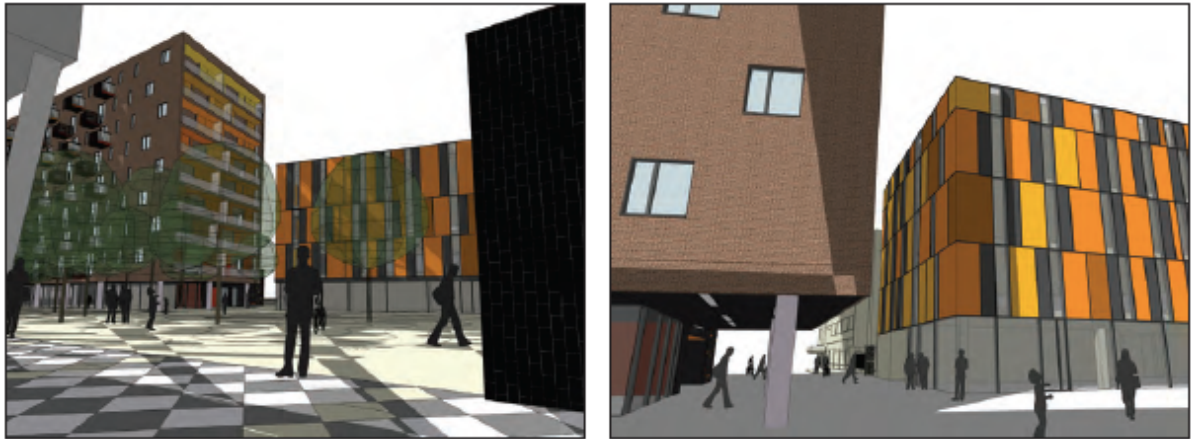


Fig: 3.4 Piano Works, Barking Central: concept sketches of exterior skin. Source: AHMM

By asserting that colour is not ‘tacked on’ in the practice, Pete not only contends that colour is a considered part of their everyday design process, shifting away from pre-existing philosophical ideas around the nativity of colour use, but distances the colour design from the artificial, the superfluous and the irrational. By framing the practice’s colour design in this way, Pete claims that their public profile and architectural work clearly illustrate that they understand colour, and are able to apply it in a sensitive and appropriate manner. Suggesting the process of discussing colour was “painful” implies that it is far from the simple, secondary, late design choice that has stigmatised colour design. Furthermore, Pete’s assertion that “a little bit of colour is a good thing” cautions against overuse. Colour’s ability imbue architecture with a warming and welcoming atmosphere responds to questions of identifiability that is critical in reproducing a sense of character:

[colour] gives the building a sort of a sense of character and allows people to identify more readily with it.²⁴⁵

The tactic of giving a building ‘character’ is a particularly pertinent claim that has

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

animated discussions in contemporary urban design.²⁴⁶ Thinking geographically about character, use of the term has become interchangeable with other geographical ideas including place, atmospheres and *genius loci*, to describe the senses and spirits of a place. *Genius loci* celebrates the individual uniqueness and identity of place. Colour, with its chromatic industrial memorialisation, is a key part of re-stitching the character of old Barking into the new iteration. In order to restore some of this identity, the colours of the historical sites borrow design cues from the past, creating an eclectic postmodern reference to past forms and transforming Barking Central “...to enhance a long forgotten neighbourhood spirit.”²⁴⁷

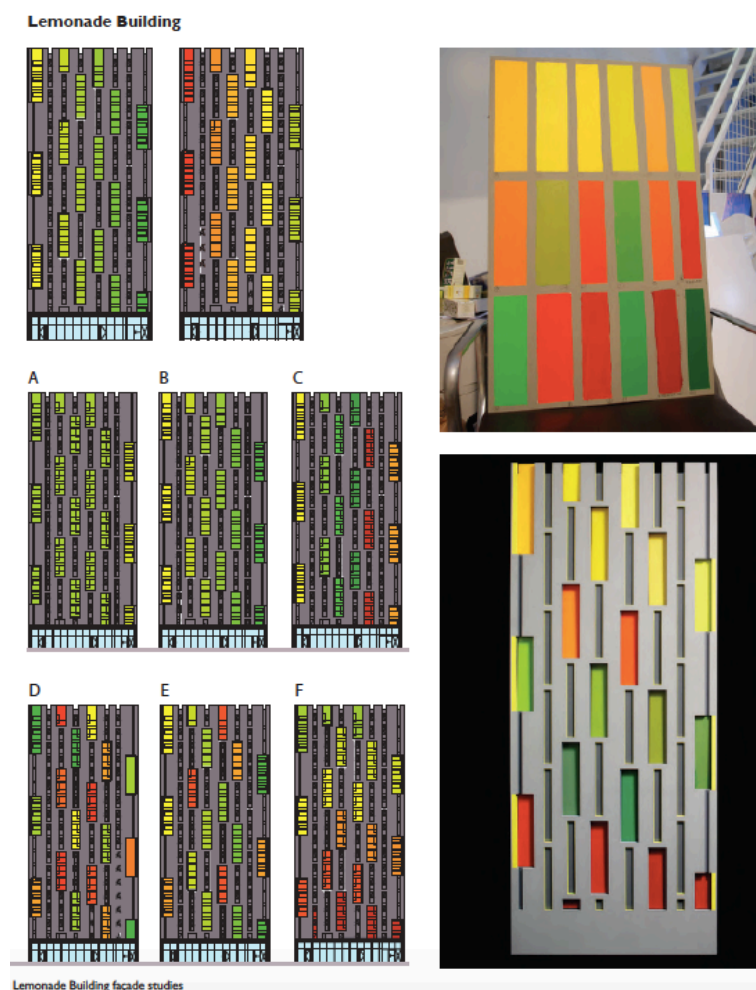


Fig 3.5 Lemonade Building façade studies. Source: AHMM

²⁴⁶ See for example Cullen, G. (1961) *Townscape*. London: Architectural Press; Conzen, M. (1966) Historical townscape in Britain: a problem in applied geography. In: House, J. *Northern Geographical Essays in Honour of G.H.J. Days*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Oriel Press, pp. 56-78; Conzen, M. (1975) Geography and townscape conservation. In: Uhlig, H, and Lienau, C. *Giessener Geographische Schriften*. Glessen-Wurzburg-Munchen, pp. 95-102; Sharp, T. (1969) *Town and Townscape*. London: Murray; Worksett, R. (1969) *The Character of Towns*. London: Architectural Press; Steele, F. (1981) *The Sense of Place*. Boston: CBI; England, R. (1983) *The Spirit of Place*, London: Pigeon Audio Visual.

²⁴⁷ AHMM. (2012) *Barking Central Information Pack*. London: Alford Hall Monaghan Morris, p. 7.

It is clear through speaking with Pete that colour is carefully considered in AHMM's practice. In the case of Barking Central, historical and industrial influences are a key part of the storytelling of the scheme. However, Pete denied that there is a particular 'approach' from wider theoretical debates that the practice draws on in the architectural design of Barking Central or elsewhere:

I don't think we really have a desire to do anything from an, as you describe it, environmental psychology perspective. But it's more intuition [...] that's probably about as far as I'll be prepared to go in terms of any kind of approach toward it. I think where it's used is generally very carefully considered [...] you can sort of see that. We do take great care to try and get the right colours. There's a massive design push, we're always very focused on that and there's a lot of debate and conversation about the right shades, the right colour to begin with.²⁴⁸

Rather than drawing upon certain theoretical devices to inform the colour design of architectural scheme, such as environmental psychology, Pete understands "design" and "perspective" as separate entities in choosing the right colours. As such, in both re-stitching Barking's industrial history and producing a special character, identity and story, architectural colour knowledge for AHMM resides in the tacit, intuitive feeling of the "right" colour, rather than explicitly drawing upon pre-existing environmental or behavioural frameworks.

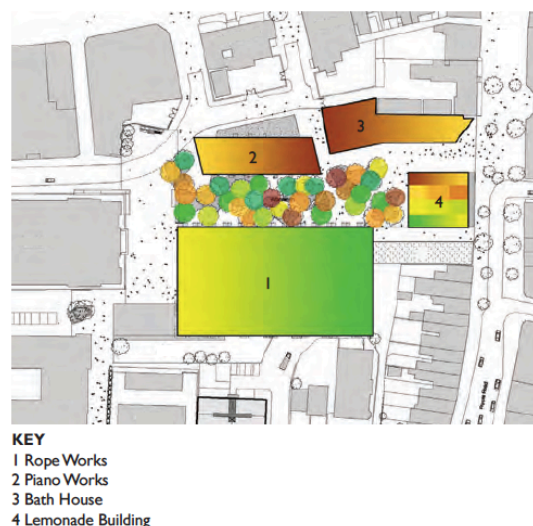


Fig 3.6 Ground floor plan showing colour inspiration. Source: AHMM.

²⁴⁸ Interview with Pete, AHMM. 19th December 2013.

During our conversation, it emerged that colour and knowledge are discursive constructs in constant dialogue with one another. Situating architectural and artistic knowledge of colour, despite my role as a research with no background in art, architectural or cultural practice, knowledge of colour is “enacted in moments of being.”²⁴⁹ During the interview, my presentation as a researcher situated my knowledge through a perception of academic authority. My research positionality and analytical gaze collaborated and as such, my multiple “selves” – researcher, geographer, perceived colour expert – is, in Haraway’s words, “the key practice grounding knowledge” because ‘position’ indicates the kind of power that enabled a certain kind of knowledge.²⁵⁰ When explaining colour in Barking Central, Pete asserts his colour knowledge by employing an artistic vocabulary, presuming I am familiar with it since I also “do colour”:

In our language they're [pause] I don't know if you're aware of RAL colours?
You probably are if you do colour...²⁵¹

This assertion of my own colour knowledge is an identifiable trope in discussions of colour and practice. Locating expertise is a spatial and situated exercise and as such, defers that there is no universality to colour knowledge. As such, it requires multiple knowledges, perspectives and approaches in order to make final decisions design choices on colour where there is uncertainty:

All our projects are kind of reviewed in turn as we go for various sort of insurances as well as design reviews [...] That's why, if there's a colour question or uncertainty, that gets raised and addressed and everyone will talk about it [...] But I think any kind of project that have a really large element of colour will likely to probably have some sort of dialogue with Morag or some other graphic designer firm just to get their kind of take on it [...] We work very closely with Morag to get the right colours. We matched them wherever we could exactly, and wherever we couldn't as close as we could, but still involving her. While we have a take on it, we would always kind of go back and double check it, if you like, with someone who's got a better artistic eye than some of us architects do.²⁵²

²⁴⁹ Tulku, T. (1997) Geographies of knowledge. In Petranker, J. *Light of Knowledge: Essays on the Interplay of Knowledge, Time, and Space*. Berkeley, CA: Dharma Publishing, p. 11.

²⁵⁰ Haraway, D. J. (1991) *Simians, cyborgs and women: the reinvention of nature*. London: Free Association books. p. 193.

²⁵¹ Interview with Pete, AHMM. 19th December 2013.

²⁵² Ibid.

Morag Myerscough was one of two key figures AHMM collaborated with in the design of Barking Central. Where muf art and architecture were responsible for the landscape design for the public realm, Morag, who runs her own own graphic design practice, Studio Myerscough, supported AHMM with the colour, signage, wayfinding and overall identity of Barking Central. Joining forces with an artist, “someone who’s got a better artistic eye than some of us architects do”, is symptomatic of the wider anxiety around the use of colour in architecture; *even if* the practice is relatively comfortable with colour. The watchful “artistic eye” needed in the making of a building reflects a wider debate in the role of tacit, embodied knowledges in the process of colour design over broader theoretical frameworks. This engagement opens up a critical question around the practitioners’ sensibilities toward colour and the possession of an innate quality best described as a ‘colour sense’ which he identifies in one of the founding partners of AHMM, Paul Monaghan:

PM: Having said that, Paul is actually very good with colour. He has this sort of knack-- he has an intuitive kind of feel about what he feels is right and what is appropriate and I would probably guess 95 times out of a hundred he's pretty close. Pretty close.

HP: You mean how the colour feels right to him?

PM: Yes, it's just something to do with his kind of natural feel for architecture, colour and people [...] You kind of either have colour sense or you don't.²⁵³

In re-stitching the urban fabric of Barking, the making of the new Barking Central draws on a range of pre-conscious, embodied knowledges. The tacit knowledges of other practitioners to support the design process reflects the importance of collaboration. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the increased attention towards collaborative efforts in architectural colour design could be indicative of an increase in architectural schools either removing all of part of colour education from the curricula in the UK. Drawing on other knowledges and expertise, such as AHMM’s involvement with Studio Myerscough and muf, is particularly visible in regeneration. This move to artistic involvement, restoring either gaps in colour knowledge, anxieties around colour use or to bolster the cultural capital of urban regeneration practices, demonstrates a particular tension in the urban realm. Far from an isolated case, the

²⁵³ Ibid.

transaction of colour knowledge from artists in architectural processes can be seen elsewhere. In the following section, I outline a second example of art-architecture collaboration in the design of the KPMG City Academy in Hackney, London.

Transfusion

Schools are rapidly reinventing themselves in the UK. Since 2010, 900 poorly performing schools have been historically, architecturally and chromatically transformed by the new academy scheme. As a result of the scheme, there are now over 4,000 academy schools in England alone. Academies are state maintained but independently run schools in England set up with the help of outside investment. Schools deemed to be ‘failing’ in struggling local authorities are erased from the urban landscape, and new ‘academies’ replace them. This surge in contemporary school architecture in the UK is a product of Tony Blair’s Labour government emphasis on academies and the *Building Schools for the Future* programme.²⁵⁴ An academy could be established under competition procedures in section 7 of the *Education and Inspections Act 2006* when a Local Authority identifies a need for a new school. This controversial system has seen an increase in the development of new schools, particularly in disadvantaged areas, such as Hackney, with the clear policy aim of improving educational outcomes. In 2010, Labour’s £55billion plan to rebuild every secondary school in England was scrapped by then-Education Secretary Michael Gove in 2010 under the new Coalition government, advocating a standardised approach to building schools with simple designs that could be replicated in a number of sites in order to build schools cheaply and quickly.²⁵⁵ His move has been the subject of much debate in architecture and design, where a Guardian roundtable event held at Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners discussed how colour and light play an important role in

²⁵⁴ See also den Besten, O., Horton, J., Adey, P., and Kraftl, P. (2011) Claiming events of school (re)design: Materialising the promise of ‘Building Schools for the Future’. *Journal of Social & Cultural Geography*. 12, pp. 9-26.

²⁵⁵ Gove was quoted at a free schools conference “We won’t be getting Richard Rogers to design your school... because no-one in this room is here to make architects richer.” See <http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2013/mar/26/school-buildings-design-architecture-success> [Accessed 3 Aug 2015].

learning when thinking about school architectures.²⁵⁶ Although colour appeared to break free from these regimes, the James *Review of Education Capital* in 2011 identified that certain aesthetic qualities such as the colour of walls, fences, tiling and brickwork are important elements that “change the feel and look of a school.”²⁵⁷ The potential for colour to modify space and generate a new sensual life are of critical importance in the education environment in general, performing part of the narrative of renewal expressed in James Sloane’s earlier comment about regeneration clichés. “Education and its exemplification in buildings” writes architecture for schools specialist Mark Dudek, “...has always been concerned with radical ideas set in new and stimulating settings. It had to be radical because it was a system of mass education, constantly reinventing itself...”²⁵⁸

One of these new education projects seeking to reinvent itself is the KPMG City Academy in Homerton, Hackney, designed by London architectural practice, Studio E. The school’s location along Homerton High Street, at the centre of Hackney, has a rich educational history. In the 19th Century, schools for the deaf, the partially sighted and London’s first Industrial School were opened along or nearby to the High Street until the First World War forced them shut. In the early 1950s, Homerton College of Technology, a secondary school for boys was opened. The school developed a difficult reputation, and after a consultation with the Hackney Learning Trust, a decision was made to close the school in 2007 and replace it with an academy, in partnership with architecture practice Studio E LLP.²⁵⁹ Based in London, Studio E is directed by architects Andrzej Kuszell and David Lloyd Jones. Work on the new academy began in mid 2007. The £30m KPMG City Academy, sponsored by the City of London Corporation and KPMG, opened its doors in September 2010. Built by Wilmott Dixon,²⁶⁰ the school is the fourth academy in Hackney, and is one of over 20 education projects designed by Studio E.

²⁵⁶ One London school reported that repainting the dining room and changing the lighting boosted the number of school meals taken up by 50%. See <http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2013/mar/26/school-buildings-design-architecture-success> [Accessed 3 August 2015].

²⁵⁷ James, A. (2011) *Review of Education Capital* Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/180876/DFE-00073-2011.pdf [Accessed 3 August 2015].

²⁵⁸ Dudek, M. (2000) *Architecture of Schools: The New Learning Environments*. Oxford: Architectural Press.

²⁵⁹ The School was described as “increasingly challenged” by the architects, Studio E, in a write up on the history and context of the school. See <http://www.architecturetoday.co.uk/?p=1482> [Accessed 3 August 2015]

The KPMG City Academy (see fig 3.8) takes its place along the street with interesting company. Situated between two residential passages, a range of sharp, newly regenerated blocks, and cream coloured, poorly maintained social housing, the school faces the Clapton Square conservation area and Hackney's 'oldest home', Sutton House. As you turn the corner from Homerton High Street towards Urwick Street, up peeks a huge glass shard decorated in colourful blue, red and green ribbons. A giant canary yellow lozenge shaped building in the main campus creeps around the corner and behind it follows the long, bursting red checkered façade of the main architectural body. Colour emerges, and dissolves, in the co-presence of other bodies; tiny red specks dart between buildings as school pupils, donned in their bright crimson blazers, hurry excitably across and around the urban campus. Light reflects off the multicoloured glass and spangles the grey concrete floor with shimmering scarlets and blues. Young trees, noticeably less vibrant green than in the CGI images, soften the sharp saturation of the bright bold architectural polychromy. The characteristically Bauhaus-esque reds, blues and yellows of the academy departs from the local colour and resembles an architectonic Piet Mondrian situated in a dusty Hackney street.



Fig 3.7 The previous Homerton College of Technology: before and during demolition (2007): Source: Flickr.



Fig 3.8 The new KPMG Hackney City Academy (2014). Source: Studio E.

Studio E, based along the Thames in South West London, have been in practice for 20 years.²⁶¹ In one of the key promotional documents Studio E produced on the project, they identified some ‘key points’ which help structure the overall vision and strategy behind the scheme. Three of these key points in particular demonstrate some of the ways discourses of colour, vibrancy and transformation permeate in architectural techniques of repair:



A symbol of aspiration and transformation in the area. A closed school site transformed into a new vibrant educational and community asset...

A colourful and glassy ribbon makes a statement in this important part of Hackney...

*Imaginative use of colour. External colour to give building a vibrant identity.*²⁶²

Fig 3.9 Studio E architects: City Academy, Hackney, East London.

Source: Tim Soar.

The site of the closed school contributes to part of the architectural narrative of repair and renewal, and colour is a prominent figure that enables this narrative to be reproduced. In addition to these technologies at work, colour is intrinsically connected to the enabling of a vibrant identity as an urban “statement”, described above. The

²⁶¹ One of Studio E’s directors, David Lloyd Jones, published *Architecture and the Environment: Bioclimatic Building Design* in 1998, and was described at the Renewable Energy Conference at the Barbican in 2007 as “the Godfather of the sustainable architecture movement in the UK.”

²⁶² Soar, T. (2009) *The City Academy in Hackney*. [image] Available from: <http://www.architecturetoday.co.uk/?p=1482> [Accessed 3 August 2015].

commentary here clearly signals colour as part of the transformative process and acknowledges the histories of the site as part of the rationale behind not simply designing a replica or a homage to Homerton College of Technology, but giving the urban site a new texture which is enacted through both the built form and the vibrant politics of colour. Furthermore, the material politics behind the claim that “a colourful and glassy ribbon makes a statement” signals a shift away from the heavy, opaqueness of colour. Positioned within a wider framework of expression, claims that the building “makes a statement” is reminiscent of Edmund Husserl’s *Abhebung* or ‘standing out’, exercising a kind of presence, or ‘tincture’ to the environment through the vibrant materiality of colour.²⁶³

These discourses of transformation are reinforced by conversations with the directors of the project. Andrzej Kuszell, one of Studio E’s founders, was project director of the City Academy project. Andrzej has specialised in school architecture over the last 15 years. In unpacking the histories of the site, Andrzej explained that he did not think Homerton College of Technology distilled an entourage of colour, which appears to subsequently shape his rationale behind the use of colour. Andrzej reinforces the notion that colour, as part of the wider strategy to transform space, is particularly prominent in schemes where the site was particularly grey, confirming that the site before was “very grey”, which made it even more important to have a vibrant building to replace it:²⁶⁴

So absolutely, you’re right. If you’re going to a drab environment, you kind of think, ‘well yes, can I lift it?’²⁶⁵

Geographical knowledge forms a key part of Andrzej’s architectural imagination. It is common architectural practice to gather data on the visual aspects of the site. This detailed process involves creating colour palettes on the local area, comprised of the chromatic make up of buildings of distinct interest, such as historical buildings and conservations sites, complimented by an understanding of the history of the site itself. However, time restraints and changing project timelines often make gathering as much data as possible a struggle.

²⁶³ Bohme, G. (1993) Atmosphere as the fundamental concept of a new aesthetics. *Thesis Eleven*, 36, pp. 113–126.

²⁶⁴ Interview with Andrzej Kuszell, Studio E architect. May 8th 2014.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

The KPMG City Academy breaks from the historical weight of Homerton College of Technology and rehumanises urban space through reproducing knowledge around colour's 'life-giving' affective urban logics. He thumbs two glossy Studio E catalogues, which are laid out on the table, and turns them both towards me:

This [Hackney City Academy] happens to be on both these covers, but I mean that's just a coincidence, but I mean it was dead drab. Well, actually, the environment wasn't dead drab. Across the road, it was a conservation area, sort of Georgian conservation area and it was a little bit unique in Hackney, and made that actually rather sensitive. The campus itself was bleak.²⁶⁶

In apprehending the architectural and urban history of Homerton College of Technology, reworking it to inform the texture of the new site, Andrzej's claim is that the dead, drab atmosphere of the concrete grey old is a mediation rather than a representation of how Homerton College of Technology felt before.²⁶⁷ The material culture of the architecture of the previous school acts as, in the words of Sørensen, "an affective accomplice in the staging of architecture" and subsequently informs the colourful materiality of the new school.²⁶⁸ The reproduction of knowledge around grey as a dead colour, and its associations in the built environment of capturing the concrete, tarmac materialities of the city, goes against artistic discussions around grey as a veil for the full colour spectrum and the most diverse of all colours discussed in Chapter 1. Furthermore, it is curious that these colours are both associated with 'life', yet are characteristic colours of the artificiality of the chemical era in the late 19th Century; *cadmium* yellow, *alizarin* reds, *cerulean* blue. The juxtaposition of the artificial and life gives the architecture an intensity previously explored by popular art figures, from the Expressionists to Kandinsky and the Fauves. Understanding colour through this vibrant grammar evokes the power of colour noted by the likes of William Burroughs, Walter Benjamin and Proust, who all saw colour as something alive. In particular, Benjamin explored the life of colour in his essay *A Child's View of Colour*.²⁶⁹ The importance of colour in a child's imagination in constructing ideas around colour as life is apparent in the architecture of the KPMG City Academy and

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ See Sørensen, T. (2015) More than a feeling: the archaeology of atmosphere. *Emotion, Space and Society*. 15, p. 64.

²⁶⁸ Ibid: 66.

²⁶⁹ Benjamin, W. (1914) A child's view of colour. In: Livingstone, R. *Selected Writings*. pp. 50-51.

through Andrzej's claims. The bright, bold colours of the façade sit within dominant colour expectations in both school architectures and the regeneration that James Sloane described at the beginning of this chapter. Expanding further on the transformative importance of the architectural intervention, Andrzej explained:

The school that was there before was closed down, entirely closed down. And being the architects that we are, when you have existing buildings you don't just automatically say, "Well we'll rip it down and start again." So our first reaction was to see if there was any way to reuse the existing building, but the clients said 'We will not reuse this building' [laughter]. We want something that's entirely different.²⁷⁰

When it came to the design process, colour did not appear part of a predetermined colour system, or emerge from a clear spatial logic like those developed by Jean-Philippe Lenclos on local, geographical colour. Instead, there does not appear to a systematic or sophisticated method of applying colour:

In terms of colour, here [Andrzej draws] will be yellow, and we just concluded that it was just logical to say 'Blue as the outside coat, retain the timber language here'. And then we said to ourselves 'And this we're going to express as another primary colour', so we went with red. And that was it.²⁷¹

Andrzej describes that using colour in the design of architectures is not a simple case of applying basic colour principles, but, like Barking Central, hinges on an assembly of different knowledges, priorities, cost limitations, materialities and geographies. Andrzej credits Hackney as being likely to be more adventurous in accepting bold colour palettes, but "Kensington might be a bit more cautious." Like many other architects spoken to during data collection for this research, Andrzej made a clear distinction between architectural colour knowledge and knowledge derived from psychology, but demonstrated an awareness of particular combinations that would elicit negative responses that he was quick to steer clear of:

The psychology of colour is another field. The view that is taken is that you wouldn't over-egg the strong oranges and reds on the building interior, because it's a colour that is aggressive and could encourage aggression amongst the

²⁷⁰ Interview with Andrzej Kuszell, Studio E architect. May 8th 2014.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

users [...] I just wouldn't do it. I mean, if you do use that sort of colour, as we have indeed - we have used it on the outside and very carefully on the inside.²⁷²

Separating the psychology of colour as being “another field” marks a shift away from the knowledge economy of some architects. The general uptake of psychological research on colour into architecture is limited, despite the basis of environmental psychology emerging from the study of architecture. Andrzej's description of avoiding ‘aggressive’ colours in his practice signals an acknowledgement of some of these typically psychological ideas around colour and behaviour but applies it with great caution and awareness of its associations. When discussing the design of the KPMG City Academy, Andrzej made it clear that colour was a critical part of giving the space a new identity, drawing on the geographies of the site to structure and justify his decision on the grounds of its material surroundings:

This issue of actually doing something transformational, that actually was going to be very different to what was there before, was pretty important. So going from a tower to a snaky ribbon - not that low-rise, but relatively low-rise - and doing something as opposed to drab concrete grey to actually saying, ‘Well, actually it could be really bright and cheerful’ and colourful was the right way to be going. These things kind of emerge from the circumstances within which one was designing.²⁷³

Through designing the new school landscape, Andrzej speaks of how ‘the circumstance within which one was designing’ emphasises the need for a new place-based experience delivered through a sensual engagement with design. His understanding that bright and cheerful design was ‘the right way to be going’ echoes the architectural movements in the post Second World War era which saw practitioners such as Bruno Taut drawing on a mode of thinking and designing that is reinforced through a vitalist, chromatic grammar:

What I'm really saying, is that creating that special environment was going to lift the community. I was told ‘Andrzej, it's not just a transformation, it's a transfusion!’ It was a lovely way to capture what it was about.²⁷⁴

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

Andrzej's comment on the performative and social function of colour reifies the KPMG City Academy's reparative technologies by claiming the particularly special environment by reproducing common tropes within the literature around colour, architecture, the body, and emotion. However, it is his comment around the way in which colour co-creates this 'special environment' that is particularly pertinent. More than a transformation, the medicalised use of an urban 'transfusion' implies a series of material, emotional and health related qualities. The practice of transfusion itself is an extraordinary event, with clear reparative associations of new life as well as the more macabre connections to potential death. Understanding colour as blood in these productions of new life, colour as a transfusion practice reproduces concepts around giving, relatedness and discourses of health through the materiality of colour. Through the imaginative geographies of transfusion, knowledge around colour as reproducing life compliments the discourse around how the KPMG City Academy brings a new life to a part of Hackney. Although colour is one of the main qualities that enables this transfusion to take place in the city, Andrzej was quick to point out that colour must not be over done and 'excessive'; a loaded description that renders colour as a delicate craft. In achieving this, Andrzej opens up a potential space for collaboration with other experts in order to get the required end product:

We are capable of doing buildings which are very, very impactful and very good in the way they perform without having an excess amount of colour [...] We involve an artist where we think he can bring another dimension to the project. It emerges out of the project that you've got the need, if you see what I mean.²⁷⁵

As explored earlier through Morag Myerscough and muf's involvement with the regeneration of Barking Central, the idea of artists working on buildings is not a new idea. The British Arts and Craft movement, Kandinsky at the Bauhaus and Henry Moore all explored the relationship between art and built form. In the late 1970s, architect Richard Hobbs invited artists to collaborate in the design of the Viewlands-Hoffman electrical substation in Seattle. It works both ways; Henri Matisse's painting *The Red Studio* was an emotional venture and an expression of his feelings towards the walls of his very grey studio. Spatial practices involving art and architecture collaboration changes how design is approached, bringing in a new set of knowledges

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

to the design process and problematising contemporary architectural approaches to colouring space as repair. However, as discussed in Chapter 1, colour anxiety infiltrates art as much as it does architecture.²⁷⁶ In the next section, I explore in greater depth the expert knowledge that artistic engagement brings to architectural practice through an examination of Studio E's collaboration with the artist Peter Fink in the making of the KPMG City Academy.

Filling gaps

If you work with an artist, you work with an artist [...] working artists are not art historians. They are artists. The moment of creation, and the moment of design, is completely irrational. It's completely unexplainable. It's indefinable [...] the artist understands emotion. This doesn't have anything to do with theory.²⁷⁷

Peter Fink is an artist²⁷⁸ with a particular interest in engaging people "directly with their cityscapes, unlocking the possibility for the new and the old to coexist in an unexpected way as part of a continually evolving urban narrative."²⁷⁹ His work is international, and plays with light and colour into to intensify urban experience. His practice is split into three main areas: Animating Cities, Placemaking and Green Urbanism. The KPMG City Academy in Hackney fell under the Animating Cities bracket as an example of a 'Cultural City'. Commissioned to develop the colour philosophy for the City Academy, I met with Peter to discuss his colour philosophy and better understand why architects might consider artistic knowledge in the design of buildings.

We sit at a large drawing table. His studio is slightly unkempt, disorderly decorated with brightly coloured images. Despite the frenzy of colours and paints around us, a towering bookshelf brimming with books on sculpture, architecture and painting stands tall against the wall behind me. Peter explains bluntly how he feels about architectonic urban colour:

²⁷⁶ McLachan, F. (2013) *Architectural colour in the professional palette*. London: Routledge, p. 70.

²⁶⁹ Interview with Peter Fink. studiofink. 19th May 2014.

²⁷⁸ Although Peter was tasked with developing the colour philosophy, Andrzej made a distinction between Peter as a 'colour consultant' and an 'artist' "No, we've never used a colour consultant. We have gone to an artist" (taken from Interview with Andrzej Kuszell, Studio E architect, May 8th 2014).

²⁷⁹ See: <http://www.studiofink.eu/about/> [Accessed 15 December 2013]

Architects start using colours suddenly. They see it in magazines and want it to be the same.²⁸⁰

Problematizing the basis of architectural claims around colour as life, Peter explains how a deeper understanding of colour is critical to design that is often misplaced in architecture practice:

HP: Do you think architects often believe colour gives a place a certain sense of vitality?

PF: It's in some way what architects like to think. They think 'it's all drab, let's paint it red or something'. But actually I think that's often to do with the thinking deficit about how to make the place more sociable and easier for people to use. They can design a building that is so complicated they can't find the end. And they need to paint a signature wall, to symbolise the entrance and so on. In some ways it addresses the shortcoming of architecture rather than adding something on top. But architects will never open themselves up to it because in some way for them colour is often seen as expressiveness of their own creativity and everything else. It's been driven by that rather than thinking more deeply about what a colour can do.²⁸¹

Peter's assertion that the practice of colour is fluid and fashionable at different moments begins to unravel his concern with the current practice of architectural colour by architects themselves, and brings into doubt their understanding of colour:

They haven't got a deep sense or thoughts about colour, or the notion of colour. They just simply use what's suddenly available for them to use. If you look at architecture backwards you can find that there are certain colours that appear for a long time [...] There are certain colour combinations that architects felt comfortable with. And now because there is a much greater variety of colours everywhere now, architects are simply using colours too freely, but in some ways a bit thoughtlessly, I feel. Because there is suddenly too much colour [...] it doesn't quite work now because there isn't a much deeper set of thoughts behind it, they just simply use it because you can.²⁸²

²⁸⁰ Interview with Peter Fink, studiofink. 19th May 2014.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid.

Peter's concern that some architects do not have a "deep sense" about colour reproduces the way colour is often little understood in the architectural imagination. One of the reasons for this lack of deep sense or thought could be linked to one of the major changes in the architectural teaching of colour in the UK. In contrast, colour education in fine art has not seen colour theory drop off so rapidly from curricula. Even Andzej described the architectural training he received almost 50 years ago as "buttons that weren't pressed as hard they might have been" and linked it to the monochromaticity of the black and white architecture magazines of the time.²⁸³ In Mark Wigley's *White Walls, Designer Dresses*, the reproduction of black and white images "facilitated the reduction of diverse tendencies and contradictions of the avant-garde into a recognisable 'look' that turns around the white wall"²⁸⁴. The decision to draw upon Peter Fink's expertise indicates that architects acceptance of the validity of his position as an artist and his aptitude in colour practice. Colour "requires strong decisions"²⁸⁵. Studio E's commissioning of Fink resists existing fears that artistic engagement is "dangerous to architectonic form and the authority of the architect."²⁸⁶

The conversation turns to the colour of the building he lives and works in; a great big, sapphire-coloured house wedged between a street of domestic Victorian houses. It is painted in a sturdy, long lasting German paint that he tells me "has produced the same paint for 300 years, and each coat will last you 30 years without fading." Other paints simply do not have this longevity. "But most people aren't interested in that. They just choose a colour chart. Let me show you." He gets up and starts to scan and select books from the shelf. He puts a book on ceramics and glass on the table. "You know this?" he asks, pulling out a copy of Josef Albers *Interaction of Colour*. In fact, I have seen Josef Albers' book neatly laid out on many of the desks of other participants - artist participants - during interviews for my research, as if they are indicating to me 'this is my knowledge; here are the books I use'. Peter continues to scan. He lays down a compact, thick handbook, bursting with different colour combinations and systems crammed on each page:

²⁸³ Andzej told me that he had a place at St Martins to study art, and had he gone he would have "probably developed in a very different way." Interview with Andzej Kuszell, Studio E architect. May 8th 2014.

²⁸⁴ Wigley, M. (1995) *White Walls, Designer Dresses*, Cambridge: MIT Press, p. 302.

²⁸⁵ McLachan, F. (2013) *Architectural colour in the professional palette*, London: Routledge, p. 70.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

HP: Do you use books like this?

PF: No. Just interests me what you're working against sometimes.²⁸⁷

Colour practice in Peter's work demonstrates the value of artist engagement in the architectural process. Not simply drawing on the knowledges represented by the vast collection on his bookshelf, punctuated with works of other art practitioners, Peter's colour knowledge is drawn from different modes. On one hand, he indicates the use of traditional colour theory presented by the luminaries like Albers; however, he also actively works against many of the systems that have emerged from Albers' et al's pedagogy. On the other hand, he demonstrates more practical knowledge informed and inspired by the work of other artists. However, a third mode indicates and perhaps explains why the colour knowledges of art practitioners are so valued in architectural colour design. Peter's earlier description of colour 'sense', and architects lacking in a 'deep sense' complicates these two other modes by suggesting that this knowledge is embodied, tacit and sensual, and gained through practice. Peter continues to develop this idea through an exploration of painters:

These ranges are only the tip of the iceberg. Underneath there are many other layers. In some ways it's interesting - if you look at Bridget Riley in the hospital, her colour ranges come from Egyptian paintings or whatever it is. In some ways those who do that get drawn into the system backwards so there will be some colour consultants that will know the colour combinations and work it backwards. They work out what designs or all the colour combinations that they can think of. And this is normally what you don't see, the designer use all these millions of books. And architects use it and so on. Not many people start from scratch like a painter does.

Colour's role in the production of urban and architectural space brings into sharper focus the importance of colour on the emotional geographies of particular environments. Away from the instructive nature of manuals and books on best colour practice, colour practice is still intrinsically hinged on the spatialities, materialities and hues of the surrounding urban or architectural contexts. When discussing the spatiality of colour in the built environment, Peter makes clear the connection between colour and the emotions when considering best practice, critiquing how these systems of colour use can fail:

²⁸⁷ Taken from fieldnotes and interview with Peter Fink, studiofink. 19th May 2014.

What I think people don't realise is the environment is responding to the process of some evolution and some totally accidental decisions. So for example, people got used to this house being blue. So it's a blue house. It became part of the mental map of the neighbourhood. So if I painted it orange or something then they would react to it like they are emotionally violated. They would like it blue. So now if a colour consultant came here to design a building they would say, 'oh, there's a famous blue landmark, so let's make the windows blue to respond to it'. This becomes sort of an existing value. But actually it was a totally accidental choice.²⁸⁸

These 'accidental choices' again go against colour theory. Rather than use a set of rules and systems, the way colour emerges on the urban landscape is not always choreographed. These emergences problematise the implicit expert knowledge artists are commissioned to impart on architectural schemes, by not only suggesting that colour can still be unplanned and random, is a quality environmental psychologist have repeatedly attempted to suppress through identifying causal, affective exchanges between colour and human response - but suggesting that these impulsive choices can impact on the urban environment as a whole over time. These micro-disruptions not only complicate the role played by colour consultants by introducing another tone to the urban landscape in unexpected spaces, but complicate colour theories designed to help inform colour choices, chromatic interactions and environmental harmony: "genius (essence) is closely aligned with chance (the accidental). Both absolve from us from the necessity to explain."²⁸⁹

The aesthetics of accident, or 'chance', has functioned as a liberating compositional principle in modern art, responsible for Surrealist automatism that inspired work such as Jackson Pollock's splashes and swirls of paint on a horizontal canvas. The notion of chance, defined as "something that happens unpredictably without discernible human intention or observable cause" highlights the tension between practitioners' embrace of the accident as a creative practice and maintaining a degree of artistic control.²⁹⁰ Chance also problematises practices in sites where specific responses are thought to emerge from the selection of particular colour palettes. Peter's conversation suggests that since there is not always a true rationale behind colour design and practice, justifying these choices can prove to be difficult when

²⁸⁸ Interview with Peter Fink, studiofink. 19th May 2014.

²⁸⁹ McLachan, F. (2013) *Architectural colour in the professional palette*, London: Routledge.

²⁹⁰ See Johnson, B. and Hill, K. (2001) *Ecology and design: frameworks for learning*. Washington: Island Press. p. 149.

placed in arenas where justification – providing evidence and a strong rationale – is central to a project’s success.²⁹¹ Negotiating these themes around expertise in practice, rationalisation and the basis onto which claims around colours efficacy is made, the next section turns to one particular architectural example - the hospital - where there has been a particular interest in engaging with expert knowledges in the design process. Examining the way colour practice is structured through hospital design, the next section will critically analyse the way colour is framed as a crucial component in the repair of bodies in healthcare environments, bearing similarity to the social and material repairs performed through the example of regeneration practice in this chapter. Using the hospital as a lens, healthcare environments provide a particularly vivid example of the way colour emerges in practice in a very different way, and how these environments are shaped through the production of instructive guides. Following a critical analysis of two guidelines, the chapter will conclude with an examination of the practice of an expert in the design of the redevelopment of the Finchley Memorial Hospital.

Quacks and mysterious machines: on colour and the repair of the body

NATURE OF CHARGE: Misbranding section 502(a), the labelling of the device contained false and misleading curative and therapeutic claims in substantially the same respect as the device involved in notices of judgement on drugs and devices, no 2098²⁹²

In the 1940s, a simple aluminium colour projector was the subject of a serious investigation. The device contained a solid 1000-watt bulb, a cooling fan, two achromatic lenses and two slides, adorned in a range of different colours. The object,

²⁹¹ During a conversation with Peter about issues he has had with planners, he told me about an occasion many years ago where he did a large sculpture in Newport, before the Gormley’s ‘Angel of the North’. They had told him to make the sculpture 1/10th of the size. In response, in the next meeting he bought along a tape recorder and played one of Edward Elgar’s composition, until they made him stop. “I looked at them very intently, until they were falling through the floor, and asked ‘now, tell me. Do you want me to cancel the high notes or the low notes?’”

²⁹² US National Library of Medicine (1942) *FDA Court Cases Notices of Judgement pertaining to Drugs and Devices*. New Jersey: US National Library of Medicine.

called the Spectro-Chrome, was a chromotherapeutic device - an instrument of repair through colour. Its creator, Colonel Dinshah P. Ghadiali, who was a fervent believer in Goethe's philosophies of colour and Hippocratic medicine, reported the device could cure paralysis and blindness. In 1946, Ghadiali was arrested, fined, and a permanent federal injunction was imposed on his invention.

The relationship between colour, the body and repair is complicated, and it is no surprise that the introduction of colour therapy techniques since the late 19th Century has created a culture of scepticism. In the West, the dazzle of colours that emerged from the rise of organic chemistry in the mid 19th Century not only inspired popular theories of colour, but also bound colour up with the therapeutic through its association with alchemy and medicine. Florence Nightingale's environmental theory and observations in *Notes on Nursing*²⁹³ and Edwin D. Babbitt's *The Principles of Light and Color*²⁹⁴ in the late 19th Century shifted design interests towards chroma, light and hue in hospital environments as key factors that can facilitate healing. From the material culture of the hospital care room, to the poetics of daylight, colour emerged as a considerable technology of repair that needed greater attention in hospital design. Hospitals in the early 1930s were characterised by the modern purist palette, with white-tiled walls replacing the dirt-concealing browns and greens that were popularised in the 1920s. Mark Wigley neatly captured the introduction of clinical whiteness in the hospital imagination with the description "modern architecture joins the doctor's white coat, the white tiles of the bathroom, the white walls of the hospital, and so on."²⁹⁵

From the 1950s to the 1970s, sensationalism around colour and healing started to gather momentum as environmental psychologists, artists and designers began to closely examine the therapeutic and affective value of colour. The artist Faber Birren, son of the noted Chicago artist, Joseph Birren, became one of the leading experts in examining this connection. Birren coined the term 'functional colour', publishing a lecture on colour and architecture "in which definitive objectives are set up and which results are determined by measurement."²⁹⁶ In *Light, Colour and Environment*, Birren wrote:

²⁹³ Nightingale, F. (1859) *Notes on Nursing*, Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company.

²⁹⁴ Babbitt, E. (1878) *Principles of Light and Color*. Montana: Kessinger Publishing.

²⁹⁵ Wigley, M. (1995) *White Walls, Designer Dresses*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

²⁹⁶ Birren, F. (1988) *Light, Colour and Environment*. Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Ltd.

One of the problems with colour in hospitals is that it has such a strong emotional content [...] and often clouds a logical and practical attitude towards it. There seems to be no middle ground - the spectrum is either magical or impotent, and opposing forces are lined up [...] Here is where colour is significant and where its role in hospital decoration and planning is important. Man is responsive to his environment and is affected by it. If there may be no direct therapy in colour, there is much indirect psychotherapy that could be applied. Enough research has been conducted in recent years to warrant a fairly rational specification of colours in hospitals.²⁹⁷

The conditioning of mood through colour - what Birren called *psychodécor* - was empirically studied by interior designers, colourists and psychologists alike. Since Faber Birren's work, the role of artists has gained increased momentum in architectural practice, and often operate under the auspices of a colour consultant - a practitioner that specialises in colour design. President of the International Association of Colour Consultants, Frank Mahkne, dedicated his life to the study of colour. Mahnke's research on colour and human response has been hugely influential within contemporary colour consultancy, applying colours in ways that "can be used to create beneficial and healthy surroundings for human beings in the places they live, work and heal from illness."²⁹⁸ The emergence of colour consultants in itself is entangled with a whole set of assumptions. Prising open a new space of expertise, the colour consultant is able to add value, apply knowledge and justify decisions on the use of colour in design to the benefit of the architect, who is increasingly characterised as being anxious around colour.

Recent research in the geography of healthcare has illustrated the intersection between the nature of health care settings, emotion and experience.²⁹⁹ Encounters in healthcare settings are often characterised by emotions such as fear, anxiety and stress.³⁰⁰ The way design influences these emotions and encounters in healing spaces attends not only to how healthcare settings are felt and experienced by patients, but also the critical role that design plays. The economic, cultural, environmental and

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ IACC-NA (2015) *AICCE and Frank H Mahkne*. Available from: <https://iaccna.com/aicce/> [Accessed 16 August 2015]

²⁹⁹ Andrews, G. (2011) 'I had to go to the hospital and it was freaking me out': needle phobic encounter space. *Health & Place*. 17(4), pp. 875-84.

³⁰⁰ Newman, S. (1984) Anxiety, hospitalization, and surgery. In Fitzpatrick, R., Hinton, J., Newman, S., Scambler, G., & Thompson, J. (Eds.). *The experience of illness*. London: Tavistock; Pride, L. (1968) An adrenal stress index as a criterion for measure for nursing. *Nursing Research*, 17, pp. 292-303; and Andrews, G. (2011) 'I had to go to the hospital and it was freaking me out': needle phobic encounter space. *Health & Place*. 17(4), pp. 875-84.

social value of ‘good design’ resides not only in constructing new buildings, but through refurbishment programmes. The importance of the visual environment in healing is generating further attention particularly through the inclusion of colour, light and art; the NHS commissioning multiple guides on the intersection between the visual arts and health.³⁰¹ On the 19 February 2014, esteemed British artist Bridget Riley was commissioned by the Imperial College Healthcare Charity Art Collection to create a 56-metre artwork, stretching along the corridors of the 8th and 9th floors of St Mary’s Hospital, London. Discussing the artwork, Riley said “the hospital corridor paintings embrace the whole space; they aim to lift the spirits and to remind one of life outside the hospital, while in no way interfering with the essential activities which must go on.”³⁰² Reminiscent of a horizontal *Ecclesia*³⁰³, Riley used the hospital walls to create a visual experience that challenges the senses and perceptions using her distinctive vocabulary of colour, shape and sequence to explore movement and rhythm (see fig 3.10). The mural was described as transforming the environment “into an uplifting place for patients and staff.”³⁰⁴ Travelling through a trauma unit, the mural “reminds patients that theirs is a transitory state, that they are there to recover and rejoin life - that life goes on, and life outside, and they feel reassured.”³⁰⁵ Other artists, including Jane Duncan, who collaborated with scientists, developed a more nuanced understanding of how colour and shape impact on patient’s emotions and actions at the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, London. Additionally, Japanese manga artist Kiriko Kuba, in her collaborative work with the Evelina Children’s Hospital, London, is another example of the how art practice in hospitals are infiltrating the design of sensual and stimulating environments.

Since the introduction of the PFI scheme in particular, the need to refurbish or build new hospitals in the UK has seen the emergence of commissioned research on

³⁰¹ See for example NHS Estates (2002) *Improving the patient experience - the art of good health: a practical handbook*. London: The Stationery Office; NHS Estates (2002) *Improving the patient experience - the art of good health: using visual arts in healthcare*. London: The Stationery Office; NHS Estates (2003) *Exploring the patient experience: an NHS Estates workshop*. London: The Stationery Office; and King’s Fund (2004) *Enhancing the healing environment: a guide for NHS trust*. London: King’s Fund; the latter is explored in more depth later in the chapter.

³⁰² Imperial College Healthcare NHS (2014) *Stunning new mural commission by British artist Bridget Riley unveiled*. Available from: <https://www.imperial.nhs.uk/about-us/news/stunning-new-mural-commission-by-british-artist-bridget-riley-unveiled> [Accessed 17th December 2014].

³⁰³ *Ecclesia* by Bridget Riley is a well-known optically vibrant painting. See Riley, B (1985) *Ecclesia* [image]. Available from: <http://www.op-art.co.uk/op-art-gallery/bridget-riley/ecclesia-bridget-riley> [Accessed 16 August 2015].

³⁰⁴ Imperial College Healthcare NHS (2014) *Stunning new mural commission by British artist Bridget Riley unveiled*. Available from <https://www.imperial.nhs.uk/about-us/news/stunning-new-mural-commission-by-british-artist-bridget-riley-unveiled> [Accessed 16 August 2015].

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

colour design to better understand how to use colour and light appropriately in these sensitive healing spaces. It is clear that the way we respond emotionally and physically to colour has been of great interest to designers of healthcare environments where the main concerns are rooted in scales of repair. However, the contested knowledges around colour and healing have problematised the way hospitals uptake colour in particular spaces. The emerging set of ideas around the value of colour in the hospital, together with an increase in the application of different expert knowledges, raises critical questions around the translation of knowledge around colour, healing and space, and the role these guides and reports play in changing the way we work and think with colour.

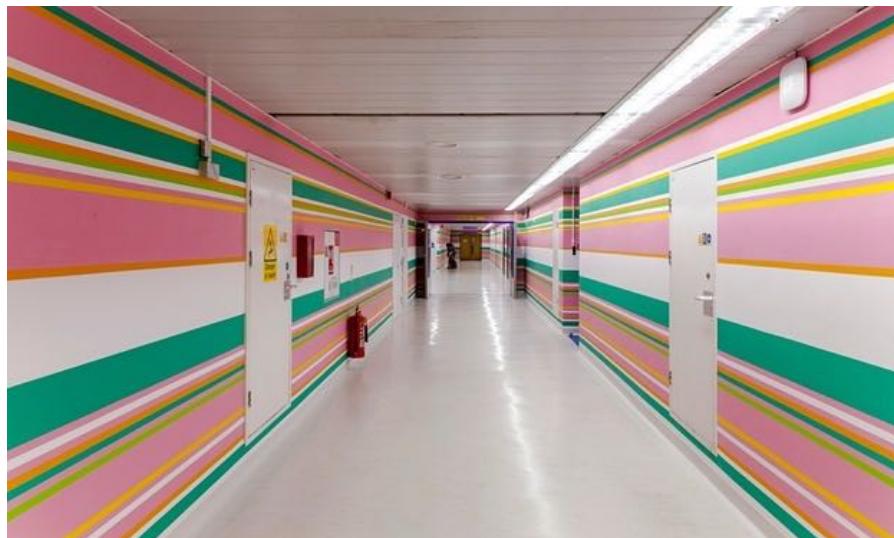


Fig 3.10 Bridget Riley's mural in St. Mary's Hospital. Source: Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust.

The following half of this chapter examines colour through the lens of health and repair. Bringing two guides on colour design for hospitals into focus, this section will analyse the contestations, expertise and imaginaries of repair emergent in the production of knowledge around colour in healthcare space. Following on from this, I explore how a colour consultant working on the colour scheme of a re-developed hospital negotiates and implements expertise in her practice. The following geographical engagement with practitioners working in healthcare environments will assess what meaningful spatial encounters practitioners aim to achieve, and how these

encounters and claims convoke the materiality of the lived body and emotion. In this section, I argue that the emergence of these new experts signals a dramatic shift in colour practice in architecture, how colour is imagined, and the production of new knowledge on colour.

Guides for design

As key sites of repair, hospitals are interesting example of how colour, knowledge and discourses of the therapeutic are taken up in design. Since the earlier works of Babbitt, Birren and Mahnke on the relationship between colour and healing, an emerging set of ideas around the ways practitioners can design hospitals in more therapeutic or comfortable ways has seen a remarkable increase. Tasked with developing new expert knowledge on how colour is a critical part of the visual, material and healing landscape of hospitals, these guides respond not only to the spatial and healing practices of colour, but also to anxieties around colour in architectural practice by offering a clearer picture of colour's therapeutic benefits in practice.

Since little information or guidance has been available to assist the development of a hospital's visual environment, the NHS called for more guidance on hospital design to be made to outline current practice, and identify key issues where colour design could enhance the environment for patients, staff, visitors. As a result, a range of publications emerged during this time around the considered use of colour in a range of healing, institutional and inclusive spaces. In this section, I examine two of these guides. The first is Hilary Dalke et al's 2004 guide *Light and Colour for Hospital Design*. Funded by NHS Estates Research and Development, the project was a 12-month endeavour to uncover an evidence base for the "use of appropriate colour design and lighting" for use by both NHS staff and built environment professionals.³⁰⁶ A leading designer and consultant in the field of environmental sensory design, Dalke has written widely on colour and the body within urban, health and wider institutional structures.

³⁰⁶ Dalke, H., Littlefair, P. J., & Loe, D. L. (2004) *Lighting and colour for hospital design. A report on an NHS estates funded research project*. London: The Stationary Office.

Examining the materiality of everything from light, to paint, to objects and surfaces, Dalke et al's in-depth examination of colour revealed that literature on colour and light in healthcare environment provided "mixed evidence [...] as well as a diversity of strategies for colour usage in interior design."³⁰⁷ Signalling the multiplicity of knowledges surrounding the strategic application of colour, the guide's main aim is to provide a valuable insight into the ways both practitioners from the built environment and NHS staff can use colour with few aesthetic or health centred repercussions. Whilst the guide does not specifically offer direct instructions on which colours should be part of schemes in certain wards or public spaces, it instead transfers agency on to non-experts in design, the NHS staff. As such this allows them to choose their own scheme within a wider framework of accessibility concerns, visibility concerns, and occasionally, advice on particularly spaces of care. The guide immediately acknowledges colour's reparative value when asserting that "the quality of the visual environment has a positive effect on the occupant's feeling of well-being and in the case of hospitals and healthcare buildings, this can affect staff and patient recovery"³⁰⁸. Furthermore, the guide states that although "colour itself cannot heal [...]" it can aid the healing process and provide a sense of well being"³⁰⁹ by affecting mood. "Thus, the right colours can help to create attitude which is therapeutic in the sense that it inspires confidence and can banish fear."³¹⁰

The presence of fear as a key driver to create more therapeutic spaces punctuates the guide, describing the hospital environment as a "frightening prospect"³¹¹, "boring and fearful" for children³¹² and "threatening" for mental health patients.³¹³ For young patients, "good colour design" means the hospital will appear "less institutional and a more pleasant and stimulating place to be in."³¹⁴ The guide advises using colour as a tool to create more "visual interest" or "overcome the sensory deprivation caused by lack of visual stimuli associated with drab or monotonous environments."³¹⁵ However, the guide clarifies that the quest for the 'right' colours "is

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid: 36.

³¹⁰ Ibid: 4.

³¹¹ Ibid: 7.

³¹² Ibid: 8.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Ibid: 4.

not as important as devising a scheme which enhances the building, whatever age it is, and thereby creates a harmonious environment”, subsequently shifting the focus away from colour as object, to the architectonics of the building and its rich architectural materiality.³¹⁶ Dalke’s perspective on colour deems it “inseparable from design”, with the integration of these architectural and chromatic materialities working together to co-produce architectural atmospheres that can impact on the overall hospital design.³¹⁷ Critically, the guide states that this integration is “another important aspect that is often overlooked” and without understanding both these things “there could be visual confusion and discord” which could produce significant negative effects on patients and staff.³¹⁸ As such, while colour is an important part of the overall design of healing spaces, the emphasis shifts on the building itself, and destabilises the idea that colour in itself is the sole active agent in enabling repair, considering how all facets of hospital space is shaped and given meaning through interventions involving aspects including colour.

In parts, Dalke et al’s guide takes on board a deterministic approach that presumes particular affective intensities and geographies in colours. In enabling this, Dalke et al’s guide highlights how certain intensities of colour should be distinctly avoided. In wards, strong colours “can create a feeling of oppression and distraction for patients”³¹⁹ and offers more general rules such as advising that “colours that do not have too much of a pastel shade and have a greyish tone result in a restful ambience, free of distraction.”³²⁰ When appraising the affective capacities of certain colours, however, the authors describe blues and greens as “calming” and yellow as bright and optimistic; most certainly acknowledging the role the coloured environment has on wellbeing in the hospital space.³²¹ It criticises vibrant practices of colour, arguing that “the use of colours to ‘cheer up’ an environment is not always appreciated by the patients and can produce over-stimulation” which is considered inappropriate in spaces of repair.³²² However, in taking on these deterministic perspectives, rooted in the psychological study of colour in creating particular ambiances or preventing

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid: 67.

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Ibid: 35.

³²² Ibid: 8.

adverse reactions, it also clearly challenges this approach and suggests basic knowledge is critical in achieving good hospital design. The guide advises to “interpret colour psychology theories for use within hospital environments with caution and avoid major personal preferences at first”³²³ despite drawing on environmental colour specialist Mahnke when asserting that colour creates “...a psychological sensation which can induce feelings of comfort, security, stimulation and much more.”³²⁴ Here, the hospital environment is structured as site where “...individual preferences have seen the creation of unpleasant solutions to particular environments, which could have been avoided with some basic knowledge about the way in which colour behaves.”³²⁵

The knowledge from which one can better understand the ‘behaviour’ of colour partly comes from the expectations around the guide as an evidence-based document directed at practitioners and those outside of the design field. However, throughout the document it is clear that added weight is given on particular key actors. The guide brings two specialists into attention whilst advising on how to practice good design. “Sometimes a really minor change to the colour design or lighting of spaces can solve an on-going apparently insurmountable problem [...] Colour design and lighting consultants can often pinpoint the reason why a place does not ‘feel’ right.”³²⁶ Challenging dominant ideas of colour psychology within hospital space, the intuitive approaches of an expert is advised as a solution to certain designs through a distinctly embodied framework; the way Dalke et al describe the colour and lighting consultants as able to instantly “pinpoint” issues in design, attuning themselves to the space. By reproducing the expert as a diagnostician, Dalke et al’s guide not only reproduces the colour consultant as a valuable resource in achieving good design, but imbues them with a reparative quality - a specialist able to ‘fix’ design problems through a unique embodied approach.

In taking on and rejecting existing knowledges circulating around colour, space and the body, Dalke et al’s guide suggests ways of treating hospital space by attending to the role the environment plays in enabling wellbeing. The emphasis on non-specialist and expert knowledges, engaging with both NHS staff and with designers is mirrored by another large NHS funded programme. In 2000, healthcare charity The King’s Fund launched a national initiative called ‘Enhancing the Healing Environment’

³²³ Ibid: 15.

³²⁴ Ibid: 3.

³²⁵ Ibid: 11.

³²⁶ Ibid: Executive Summary.

(EHE). The programme was designed to support refurbishment programmes within NHS healthcare environments, and explored “practical ways in which healthcare environments can be improved by the use of colour, light, art and design.”³²⁷ The aim of the program is to enable nurses to lead an enhancement project and is designed to show how staff teams with “no specialist knowledge” can make dramatic changes in the healthcare environment.³²⁸ Like the Dalke et al guide, the initiative draws its inspiration from Florence Nightingale’s observations and as such, the initiative’s empirical grounding is centred around how the environment can be manipulated to be made more therapeutic. The rationale for the programme expresses an emotive concern for the current therapeutic hospital scene: “for many of today’s patients, visitors, and staff [...] the hospital environment still remains soulless, drab and depressing.”³²⁹

The King’s Fund program is unique in the sense it trained teams from within hospitals in how to plan, manage and approach the design of their refurbishment. Despite the programme highlighting “the therapeutic impact of good design”³³⁰ many of these improvements did not specifically engender the therapeutic qualities of colour in itself, but commended the physical and visually attractive nature of their designs as key.

Responding to an area often neglected in hospital environment design, The King’s Fund collaborated with NHS Estates to develop the EHE programme further by seeking to improve design for the end of life and dying in *Improving the patient experience: Environments for care at the end of life 2008-2010*. Initial research highlighted the emotional intensities at play in these particular spaces and moments, which were confirmed through interviews³³¹ with staff and patients. Through this examination, The King’s Fund unveiled that certain elements are critical in designing for end of life care, which can be expressed through colour. In bringing both nature and the body back into these spaces, there is a clear emphasis on natural colours which

³²⁷ Mulholland, T. (2003) *Government pledges £1m for hospital makeovers*. Available from: <http://www.society.guardian.co.uk/nhsperformance/story/0,8150,1084010,00.html>. [Accessed 6th July 2015]

³²⁸ Waller, S. and Finn, H. (2004) *Enhancing the Healing Environment: A Guide for NHS Trusts*. London: Kings Fund.

³²⁹ Department of Health and The King’s Fund (2006) *Improving the Patient experience – Celebrating Achievement: Enhancing the Healing Environment Programme 2003-2005*. London: The Stationery Office, p. 10.

³³⁰ King’s Fund (2010) *Improving the patient experience: Environments for end of care life*. London: King’s Fund, p. 15.

³³¹ One participant noted “...people come to the mortuary department with trepidation and fear, not only because they have they’re having to see a deceased loved one, but because of the sort of general conception of what a mortuary is....” See Arthur, A. (2009) *Environments of Care at End of Life: Evaluation of the King’s Fund Enhancing the Healing Environment Programme. Interim Report*. Nottingham: University of Nottingham.

are repeatedly described as “soothing.” Given the palliative spaces of these sites, the ability to soothe is a more powerful concept to try and capture in colour design than the cheery, vibrant grammars demonstrated in the Dalke report. The soothing textures and colours of these palliative environments are demonstrated through an overwhelmingly ‘natural’ palette, from an emphasis of pastel greens, browns, and occasional accents of other colours such as red.³³² For example, at Newham University Hospital, “the natural colour palette of creams, leaf greens and soft purples” were chosen in order to create a “tranquil space.”³³³ Many of these colour designs are facilitated through workshops on colour and light which were used to support the selection of colour palettes that could effectively create “feelings of comfort and warmth.”³³⁴

In naturalising the healing environment, colour and light in the EHE program for end of life care are re-appropriated, shifting colour away from the deterministic tendency to attribute particular colours to behaviours, as purported by the philosophies of Babbitt, Mahnke and Birren. Responding to the body in healing design, artists were enlisted in order to help ‘re-humanise’ the space. An evaluation of the programme in 2003 noted an increased humanisation of the hospital environment, evidenced by the production of uplifting environments through the use of artworks, described as helping “humanise spaces, provide distraction and lift the spirits.”³³⁵ The use of artwork exceeds purely symbolic meaning and regimes of representation, and instead focuses on the active and embodied practices of art. As Claire Colbrook argues, “art does not express the ‘lived’ but releases from the lived the impersonal power from which any orientated and located life emerges.”³³⁶ Artists are therefore central to the production of a particular type of space that enables the emergence of an ‘orientated and located life’, affecting the mood of patients through lifting the spirit, which in turn contributes to the regimes of healing within the guide. Through the spatial practice of art, the production of art within hospital architectonic space, the emotive ‘lifting of the spirit’ assumed through these practices connects patients with the

³³² King’s Fund (2010) *Improving the patient experience: Environments for end of care life*. London: King’s Fund, p. 19.

³³³ Ibid: 38.

³³⁴ Ibid: 44.

³³⁵ Ibid: 67.

³³⁶ Colebrook, C. (2005) The Space of Man: On the Specificity of Affect in Deleuze and Guattari. In Buchanan, I. and Lambert, G. (eds.) *Deleuze and Space*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 189-206.

world and disconnects them from mortality, with emotions reverberating through the real world and real beings.³³⁷ Central to the production of life and healing, the human and more than human geographies of emotion, together with the role of the artist, enables repair through distracting patients with images and art.

Although each team could factor in a budget for art co-ordinators to be part of the design of each scheme, The King's Fund placed an emphasis on involving 'non-specialists' - care teams, patients and relatives - in the decision making, including consultations around colour. An Estates manager on one project was recorded in an evaluation report as saying they "have had a number of opportunities on this programme to reassess my approach to colour and texture in a way that is not normally available to me."³³⁸ Part of this emphasis included sessions and workshops on light and colour, including a visit to the Tate Modern for inspiration.³³⁹ Providing non-specialists educational sessions on colour and light altered the perception teams had on certain creative practices, noting in one case: "we were able to throw out a design that came from the first architectural practice because it did not meet the highest standards we had set for the project."³⁴⁰ Allowing each team to control the design gave the non-specialist team a greater freedom to practice, with one participant reflecting on the restrictive nature of collaborating with architectural practitioners:

I'll give the architect his due - they drew up things that fitted with what we wanted in terms of the space of the rooms and reception areas, but it was the translation of the finer detail that they just went into hospital mode...The architects have got this thing called the blue book and they only looked in there, and they wouldn't - they couldn't - think outside, that there might be other suppliers who could do something different for this project.³⁴¹

It is clear through these two documents that evidence on how colour should be used in hospital environments is mixed and inconclusive. Colour's elusive nature, exceeding representation, makes it difficult to consolidate in a guide. It is apparent that there are

³³⁷ Smith, M., Davidson, J., Cameron, L., and Bondi, L. (2009) Geography and emotion emerging constellations. In: Smith, M., Davidson, J., Cameron, L., and Bondi, L. (eds) *Emotion, Place and Culture*. Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 1–18.

³³⁸ Ibid: 29.

³³⁹ In an evaluation of the success of this series of the program, it was reported that some found the visit to the Tate Modern challenging. However, the visit helped some of the team view art in a new way, particularly in relation to their own projects. See Kings Fund (2010) *Improving the patient experience: Environments for end of care life*. London: p. 80.

³⁴⁰ Ibid: 68.

³⁴¹ Ibid: 82.

pre-existing ideas around how hospital healing environments should be structured and how these ideas differs to specialist and non-specialist knowledges; from the rejection of the architect's 'blue book' to the embodied knowledge of the colour and light specialists. Across the two guides repair is appropriated in different ways and differ in the manifold settings of changing healing spaces. In The King's Fund guide, colour is introduced to break away from the clinical imagination of the hospital, with their End of Life initiative seeking to make the healing environment more domestic through palettes with a distinctly 'soothing' grammar, appropriate to the particular care, whereas in the Dalke et al guide, there is less emphasis on these natural palettes, offering more advice on mistakes to avoid. Although there is a general common ground, producing healing environments cannot be standardised. Throughout both these guides, there is a clear assertion that colour and emotion have a clear relationship which is presented in positive and negative languages. However, the guides swing between design philosophies of determinism and subjectivism. In terms of recommendations, there is a mixture of both recommendations of imposing particular palettes and colours, but at the same time both guides acknowledge that these ideas cannot fully be imposed. Within the landscape of post-medical geography, hospitals are conceived as "contested spaces where different stakeholders seek to communicate their ideas of good hospital design."³⁴² While both guides conceive of colour as reparative in different ways, different stakeholders are given the knowledge, agency and power to intervene in the design process or enlist the support of expert knowledge when required. Furthermore, the mobility and translation of ideas around colour and healing differs between the guides with particular ideas taken up and other presented as a warning. Ultimately, the guides are inconclusive on the subject of what legitimate 'colour knowledge' is and who owns it. On the one hand they highlight the role of experts through their unique in depth knowledge, yet on the other they advocate that 'basic' knowledge exists. There is a clear conflict between the use of the guide as a learning tool, and the tacit, embodied knowledge practiced by specialists in colour design.

³⁴² Gesler, W., Bell, M., Curtis, S. et al. (2004) Therapy by design: evaluating the UK hospital building program. *Health & Place*, 10, pp. 117–128.

Space diagnosticians: Fixing Finchley Memorial Hospital

There was once a cottage hospital called Finchley Memorial
That stood in these grounds that were leafy and arboreal.
It survived 104 years before it was knocked down
And replaced by a new build, to take over the crown.
Who knows if this one will last, for time immemorial?³⁴³



Fig: 3.11 Finchley Memorial Hospital (2014). Source: Author's own.

In 2007, Finchley Memorial Hospital was deemed unfit for purpose, and plans were made to redevelop the site. Serving Finchley residents in North London for over a century, the hospital was built on two acres of land donated by local philanthropist Ebenezer Homan in 1908. Consisting of only two wards, a tiny operating theatre and just 18 beds, over time, the hospital struggling to meet the changing healthcare needs of a growing community.³⁴⁴ Barnet council reported serious problems with the condition of the main building and later developments, accommodation and

³⁴³ Poem, written by Finchley Memorial Hospital bed manager, Linda Stephens, on display inside the main building of the hospital.

³⁴⁴ See Barnet Council (2007) "Planning Brief: Finchley Memorial Hospital and Bow Lane Playing Fields" at https://www.barnet.gov.uk/dam/jcr:6c1617a7-2ae5-4308-a6ac-7fdcba6e2086/finchley_memorial_hospital_adopted_planning_brief_jun07.pdf. [Accessed 09 Feb 2017]

accessibility. As a result, the hospital Plans were made in June 2007 to redevelop the site into a new community hospital in an estimated £30million renewal (see fig 3.11).³⁴⁵

The hospital's current incarnation as Finchley Memorial Hospital emerged after the First World War, as a way of commemorating soldiers from the area who had died.³⁴⁶ An art programme was produced to celebrate this memory, highlighting the hospital's heritage and "documenting 'history in the making' with the move to the new building, in an attempt to ease the move from the existing hospital to the new facility."³⁴⁷ These include a large collection of memorabilia, plaques and photographs, copied and restored digitally by the Barnet & Finchley Photographic Society for display in the hospital and a community arts project centred around memory and health to be exhibited in ward areas.³⁴⁸

The new facility has been designed by architects Murphy Philipps, enlisting the support of two others; London landscape architects fabrik, and colour consultant, Frances Tobin. Frances, an artist from Brighton, coordinated the key visual elements of the new facility, and was responsible for the development of a colour scheme throughout the hospital, "enhancing the user experience through clarity of the overall design."³⁴⁹ Colour, for Francis, has a major role in the appearance and ambience of any environment and is "a powerful but inexpensive design tool within the creation of a building."³⁵⁰ The new colour palette is intended to not only enhance the environment but provide important spatial information as well. Through colour, Frances' design aims to "enhance the patient/visitor experience and working environment for the staff by providing a legible narrative along the journey...through to their destination in the hospital."³⁵¹ When describing the colour scheme of Finchley Memorial Hospital, she considers the polychromy of it all despite the architectural skin's dominance of clinical white:

³⁴⁵ Like the KPMG City Academy discussed earlier in this chapter, this renewal was enabled through the UK government's Private Finance Initiative Fund (PFI).

³⁴⁶ The hospital's original name was Finchley Cottage Hospital.

³⁴⁷ Tobin, F. (2010) "Art and Colour: Finchley Memorial Hospital, London." Available at: francestobin.com/pdf/Finchley-Memorial-Hospital.pdf. [Accessed 6th December 2015].

³⁴⁸ The arts programme was also developed by Frances Tobin.

³⁴⁹ Tobin, F. (2010) "Art and Colour: Finchley Memorial Hospital, London." Available at: francestobin.com/pdf/Finchley-Memorial-Hospital.pdf. [Accessed 6th December 2015].

³⁵⁰ Ibid: 8.

³⁵¹ Interview with Frances, May 1st 2014

In some ways this is a very colourful building.... I used a palette of greens, because it was coming from the surrounding. The site is big, right. It's a big field. How that sits in that field and then with the houses around it,...I chose this white that I thought would work with the building on the interior. The render is a different white, but I thought it would work, and it does. There's an interior courtyard that have these green cladding, really quite green and mauve, vibrant cladding on the lift shafts and stuff, but you can see at any point in the waiting rooms as it reflects.³⁵²

She tells me that her white approach was not well received by other architects. On the opening of the new hospital, she recounts two comments scribbled in the visitor book:

They put in there 'architects that don't know how to use colour' and 'how could you just have a white building?!' But in fact it's not a white building. There are levels of white, and then there's colour. I think there's colour all over [laughter]. This architect disagreed. And I wasn't upset. I just thought, 'Well, you're *that* sort of architect.' [chuckles] But he obviously thought it should have reds, yellows or something different in there. But I didn't. And neither did anyone else it seems that was involved in the project.³⁵³

The interior of the hospital has a distinctively domestic feel. Comfortable chairs, sofas and ambient music plays in the background as you move around the various wards and passageways. The interior furniture reflects the overall colour scheme Frances promotes. From the plant pots to the frames used to hang up old photographs, right down to small details like the colour of the cushions, greens and mauves flow across the entire interior scheme (see fig 3.12). The domesticated design of the hospital space, like those promoted in the guides earlier on in the chapter, conceals the hospital space.

Despite their expertise and practical experience, colour is no less complicated for the colour consultant, particularly in healthcare spaces³⁵⁴. Frances notes that she often has to negotiate an expectation that their specialism in colour defines them as bold and polychromatic practitioners:

³⁵² Interview with Frances, May 1st 2014.

³⁵³ Interview with Frances, May 1st 2014

³⁵⁴ Sven Hesselgren colour theorist and a practicing architect, tried to put into practice the color harmonies developed by the revered German chemist, Wilhelm Ostwald by applying them in a project for a hospital. According to his own words, the results were "terrifying." See Hesselgren, S. (1984) Why colour order systems? *Color Research and Application*. 9(4), p. 222.



Fig: 3.12 Homely features. Finchley Memorial Hospital (2014).

Source: Author's own.

FT: Often when I'm working on something, people say 'but where's the colour? When are you going to bring in the accent colour?' You can do it sometimes, but actually I find it sometimes a bit dated [...] When I'm doing the main atrium of a building, the interior, they go, 'where's the big colour?' And I'm going 'Why? You are going to have all those people going through there wearing different colours, and chaos, why do you want that? You don't want to just convey just big, bright, jolly colour'.

HP: What would you think the dangers would be if you had used a very bold, loud palette for the outside? Like yellow or blue?

FT: Well, I think it would have looked dinky-doo. To me it would have clashed with the architecture.³⁵⁵

Frances explained the palette she adopted, expressing clear spatial and temporal modifications to respond to the desired moods, feelings and atmospheres of particular areas of the hospital:

There's a series of deep tranquil greens on the externally glazed panels, offset by shades of white. The memorial garden opposite the main building shares these deep greens and offers a quiet space for contemplation. Internally, the building sports a decor of slate, wood and chalk white with gradating green elements from vibrant mid tones visible on the exterior through the waiting areas the paler hues in the consulting, treatment and bedrooms for reassurance and calm.

³⁵⁵ Interview with Frances, May 1st 2014.

The focus on tranquility and calmness is an integral theme in the colour design of Finchley Memorial Hospital. Responding to issues around how the physical form of health care institutions sends messages which affect how they are felt and regarded, often as austere and frightening spaces, Frances' design choices are explicitly connected to the production of the calmness, reassurance and quiet that she seeks to imbue within and around the hospital space. Responding to discourses around health and wellbeing promoted by green spaces, Frances' colour scheme imitates the physical properties of green space through the colour scheme that runs through the architectural skin and interior. Much of this inspiration comes from its connectivity to the organic world, drawing on the natural materialities of slate, wood and chalk, and the verdant greens of the memorial garden. Although not explicitly referred to as a psychological intervention, nor drawing on any scientific model, the grammar Frances uses is consistent with overarching discourses around the claims of green as creating feelings of calm. This attention and sensitivity to materiality is an attribute Frances assigns to her specialist background:

The first time I was approached by an architect to work with them – my background is textiles and fashion – this architect was working on a mental health hospital. They were very concerned because of their, I suppose, lack of training with colour. They knew as they'd worked as a textile designer before, and they knew that as a textile designer you have a different sensibility to colour and a different understanding of the relationship between colour and material.³⁵⁶

Frances' textile background not only signals her expertise in colour design, but the value she has in sensitive environments where colour is critical in producing appropriate feelings, atmospheres and sensations in a mental health space. In a particularly delicate place where design must be taken seriously, Frances' knowledge is seen as a way of combating the architects' fear of colour, describing them as "very concerned" because of their lack of training. Francis attributes this knowledge as a "competence in colour" with unique access to research that can back up her choices:

[The architects] knew that they wanted a level of competence in colour and also what they needed was somebody with access to proven research on the effects of colour on both the male and female psyche so that I could justify the colour selection, because this was an acute mental health hospital, where people would be

³⁵⁶ Interview with Frances, May 1st 2014.

staying for some time. So I could justify [...] I sort of had that in me. I sensed that but my research backed that up. I also found other research about people's responses and what calms people, what invigorates people about certain colours... How I work one colour and how I show the colour and the rationale and the reasoning for the colour, I haven't had that much objection to it.³⁵⁷



Fig: 3.13 The Tower (l) and waiting room (r).

Finchley Memorial Hospital (2014). Source: Author's own.

Negotiating between evidence based research and embodied knowledge situates the colour consultant as a unique and highly valued colour practitioner. Daryl Murphy, a founding partner at Murphy Philipps Architects, noted that Frances' knowledge on the therapeutic impact and benefits of colour and its effect on mental health was crucial in enhancing the design of the mental health hospital they collaborated on.³⁵⁸ Justifying her decisions is a key part of her work as an expert, producing rationales and reasoning behind her choice which gives her a greater sense of freedom than an architectural practice might experience, such as cost, anxiety, negotiating with key stakeholders and other important architectural decisions. The value of Frances' work not only hinges on her training and confidence in using colour, but also her ability to draw upon empirical research. Complimenting her research, Frances expresses a 'sense' for colour and its effect on emotions that is embodied. Explaining her

³⁵⁷ Interview with Frances, May 1st 2014.

³⁵⁸ Testimonial to Frances on her webpage: <http://www.francestobin.com/architecture.html> [Accessed 9th Feb 2017]

knowledge of this research for the example of the mental health hospital she worked on prior to Finchley Memorial Hospital demonstrates a distinctive environmental psychology to her awareness:

In the dining room in a mental health hospital, that's likely to be one of the trickier areas for violence or patients kicking off. Red colours, warm colours with reds in or red tones, they increase your appetite. They're sort of a natural thing to have in a dining room. But in fact they also increase anxiety and energy, and most people kick off. How do you make a dining room that doesn't suppress people's appetite - which sometimes the drugs they are taking or their illness is doing - but at the same time keep calm? It was like a science thing rather than an artistic thing. It wasn't just 'oh, we feel like this'. It was quite important to get this right.³⁵⁹

Frances makes it clear that hospital design comes with a series of clinical parameters that makes the design of these spaces particularly worthy of expert knowledge on the ramifications of colour on health and emotion. She draws on particular examples, such as the effect of red on appetite and how an understanding of this knowledge shapes her spatial design choices on an essentialist level; describing is a "natural thing to have in a dining room." However, she demonstrates an understanding of the multifarious and often contradictory nature of following these logics with her cautionary tale of how red can also unsettle. Although Frances attributes this knowledge as scientific, and not artistic, she practices detailed artistic methods of colour design during the process of making colour schemes. Describing the process she undertook for Finchley Memorial Hospital appears in many ways a geographical approach to design, considering place, the building's relationship to its environment and knowledge:

I get all the information I can get. The first thing I do is I go and look at the site. I go where it's going to be, and then I get the architect to talk me through their whole process of why they came to that design decision. Why is it like that? I need to get into their head of what they are trying to say. I've got to understand the architect and I've got to understand what they wanted to do. Often I will try to convince them to go a certain route, if I believe something really strongly. Then I play with colour, basically. I take in mind the architect's brief, the client's brief.... Then I do all the things with the photography and colour swatching, and then I build it out, in layers, so I'll have that base palette. That's the ground. And then I have a big white desk, and I leave it there. And I just leave it, and I

³⁵⁹ Interview with Frances, May 1st 2014.

get on with another job. And then I look at it and I think.³⁶⁰

Her approach demonstrates a refreshing confidence in using colour and a level of thoroughness, time and contemplation that for many architects, may be restricted. Unlike going directly to the familiar quantitative methods of connecting colour to RAL, Pantone or Munsell systems where colour is given a number and applied to a scheme, Frances' takes a material approach. Using a 'colour swatching' technique, a method that typically involves a sample of cloth, responds to her textile background and appreciation of the material. Once she has negotiated all the voices and briefs circulating the design of the hospital, the very making of a colour scheme is practiced in ludic terms as she describes "playing" with colour before making final design decisions. Frances describes another method in order to gather the materials she needs:

I take a 360-degree photograph of where it is going to be, and I colour match key materials. I know that's my base. Now I can put an intervention on top of that that is louder or quieter, but there's a relationship... You're going into a place, and you're forcing on that place. You're making an intervention...you're enforcing on other people your decision.³⁶¹

Describing colour as in intervention, "forced" onto place, gives colour a sense of disruption. Interventionist techniques, which frequently use the urban landscape as a preferred platform, are critical art practices and strategies to (re)shape space. These destabilising and disrupting processes can trigger affective and sensory modulations which could evoke "changes in people's ways of doing, seeing and being."³⁶² As such, the language of intervention described by Frances is a type of affective modulation emphasising the primacy of emotions in facilitating change. When describing the process of redeveloping Finchley Memorial Hospital, Frances alludes to this colour-emotion relationship when discussing the changes that were made and the power of the intervention on staff at the hospital:

It was quite interesting talking them through the colour and what it might be and what effect that might be. And I do know that because the receptionist that was

³⁶⁰ Interview with Frances, May 1st 2014.

³⁶¹ Interview with Frances, May 1st 2014.

³⁶² Markussen, T. (2012) The disruptive aesthetics of hijacking urban space. *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture*, (4). p. 2.

in the old building didn't want to go. She used to sulk. She was always sulking in the old building. And you'd ask for something, she'd go, '[inaudible] It's over there.' And she would be like this to members of the public, not just because I was on the team developing the new thing. Then after about a month she'd been in the new building I went in, and she said, 'Do you know something? I love it here. I was going to resign. I love this building.' [laughter] I was like, 'I can't believe that.' But that is the power of our building.³⁶³

In many ways, Frances' negotiation of space, research, expertise and solutions is diagnostic or clinical in nature; going in, assessing, questioning, and responding. Thinking through this diagnostic method of the colour consultant in this section is useful in considering the reparative dimensions of colour and practice. Drawing upon their expertise, claims and using a combination of evidence-based research and embodied knowledge, the colour consultant emerges as a key figure in understanding the workings of colour and repair as both a valuable asset in design teams, and emblematic of a wider need for support in the judicious colour design of a range of architectural environments.

Concluding thoughts: the architecture of repair

This chapter shows how colour is negotiated, perceived and expected to perform repair in urban architecture. It argues that repair is embedded within architectural narratives around regeneration and traces the presence of repair using four different lenses: re-stitching, transfusion, filling and fixing.

In the first section, I show how repair emerges in architectural discourses around the stitching together of the historical and social urban fabric of Barking Central development. Deploying the reparative device of 're-stitching', the architectural and historical repair of Barking Central is imagined through the weaving together of Barking's industrial past and narrated through the iconic colours of the products that were a key part of its history. Stitching is a form of repair that connects together and strengthens; while re-stitching implies the threads have come apart and needs repairing once more. In architectural narratives, re-stitching is a term that is often used to make sense of renewing the urban fabric. In this chapter, I show how re-

³⁶³ Interview with Frances, May 1st 2014.

stitching can be used to understand how practitioners imagine repair on a wider urban scale.

In the second section, I demonstrate how colour is a key part of wider narratives of giving life to dead space through an examination of the reparative metaphor of ‘transfusion’ and by attending to one particular architectural landscape, the *Building Schools for the Future* programme and the redesign of material school spaces. Unpacking transfusion, the section critically examines the claims that architectural practitioners make and demonstrates how these claims can be traced in the reparative, medical languages of colour and life. As such, this chapter disentangles one of the common tropes around regeneration, ‘giving life’, and opens it up for greater discussion in the next chapter.

In addressing some of the major tropes around colour, this chapter unpacks the geographies of colour knowledge and practice. From colour sense to accidental choices, I show that architectural colour is a discursive field of multiplicity woven between different modes of engagement. Attending to these intuitive responses, I argue how ‘colour sense’ responds to knowledge around colour and how these contingent, embodied knowledge and indescribable feelings produce expertise and affective experience in colour design. Responding to the need for collaboration and expertise, the third reparative device, ‘filling’, moves beyond the material and into the realm of knowledge, imagining colour knowledge as porous and needing repair through artistic expertise. Through an in-depth discussion with Peter Fink, the artist involved in the development of the KPMG City Academy school, it uses filling as a reparative device to demonstrate the use repair has beyond the material and into decision-making, where gaps in architectural knowledge can be filled through enlisting artistic support in design.

Considering the complexities of colour, emotion and health in greater detail, the last section of this chapter shows a unique diagnostic approach, drawing on data gathered from two colour design guides and conversations with a practicing colour consultant, Francis Tobin. Working with and against scientific research on colour and the emotions, I argue that these guides shift between neurological determinism and experiential understandings of colour, making visible the tension between positivist and post-positivist models. Tracing a history of rational approaches to colour design in hospital care space, like those presented by Faber Birren, and contrasting them to contemporary practices, I argue that colour is seen as remedying the institution of the

modernist hospital through design-led domestication, challenging conceptions of it as a space of fear. Finally, demonstrating the final iteration of repair, ‘fixing’, this chapter uses the case of the previously unfit Finchley Cottage Hospital in North London and demonstrated how colour competency presents itself and gives a critical examination of how broken places are ‘fixed’. This last section demonstrates how the emergence of these new experts signals a dramatic shift in colour practice in architecture, how colour is imagined, and the production of new knowledge on colour.

In these three iterations of repair, re-stitching, transfusion and fixing, the overlapping theme cutting through is a curious medicalisation of repair. This chapter argues that repair should not only be considered as a description of urban maintenance, but the wider medical, health and wellbeing discourses entangled with it. As such, the need to repair simultaneously signals a presence of *disrepair*. In the next chapter, I examine how the production of spaces in need of repair become key sites for chromatic intervention in the global *Let’s Colour* project.

Chapter 4

Colouring one million lives: Reviving
dead spaces



There is something about the power of colour that can act as a trigger to regeneration and reviving pride in the local community. However, while the paint can act as a catalyst, communities themselves have to take things forward.³⁶⁴

On the 12th June 2014, an article from a sponsored series in *The Guardian* newspaper on “humanising urban regeneration” described the revitalising force of colour in local regeneration.³⁶⁵ Chris Cook, global sustainability director for the decorative paints unit at AkzoNobel, who make Dulux paints, argued that while paint itself cannot change the world, it can make a huge difference to how people feel about their environment. In the UK, the changing political climate, framed by the austerity localism of the 2010 Coalition government, championed local action through neighbourhood renewal projects, engaging communities themselves to revive their local areas. In a pledge to empower the local community, the Coalition government of 2010 announced the Big Society.³⁶⁶

It’s about enabling and encouraging people to come together to solve their problems and make life better. Some people say that there are no big ideas in politics anymore. But I think this is about as big as it gets. It’s not the big state that will tackle our social problems and increase wellbeing. It’s the Big Society.³⁶⁷

Taking place in a wider neoliberal agenda transferring greater responsibility to the voluntary sector and local government, the Big Society is viewed as a combination of heavy government spending cuts and civic enterprise promoting community action and voluntarism. The slogan, “Big Society, not Big Government” was characterised by emotional emoticons; the ‘o’ in ‘society’ was given a smiley face, while the ‘o’ in government was given a sad face. In the Big Society, community strength and self-help formed part of the political response to mend what was dubbed ‘broken Britain’.³⁶⁸ According to think-tank Localis, “as the public organisations closest to local communities, local authorities must be able to harness their 19th Century predecessors

³⁶⁴ Scott, M. (2014) Humanising Urban Regeneration: Success lies in simplicity. *The Guardian*. 12th June 2014. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/humanising-urban-regeneration-success-simplicity> [Accessed 3rd March 2015]

³⁶⁵ Notably, the series, *Planet Possible*, is sponsored by AkzoNobel themselves.

³⁶⁶ See Smith, M. J. (2010) From Big Government to Big Society: Changing the State-Society Balance. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 63(4), pp. 818-833.

³⁶⁷ Cameron D. (2010) Prime Minister’s speech on wellbeing on 25 November 2010. Retrieved from www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-on-wellbeing Accessed 15 March 2013

³⁶⁸ See Tunstall, R. Lupton, R. Power, A. and Richardson, L. (2011) *Building the Big Society*. CASE Report. p. 67

to become the fulcrum needed to drive regeneration programmes across the country.”³⁶⁹ The Big Society rhetoric is not new. Evoking images of the do-gooders knocking on working class doors, Margaret Thatcher claimed that 1980s Britain needed to return to the values of the Victorians.³⁷⁰ Labour politicians in particular have been prominent in re-imagining the negative historical memories of this era, including squalor, class division, misery and ignorance.³⁷¹ At a time where pots of public money are no longer available to fund top-down regeneration schemes, the ‘austerity localism’ of the Big Society mobilises human capital over significant expenditure to enable urban and social change.³⁷² Debunking the myth of a crisis in civic participation, the healthy levels of engagement in social movements, volunteering and a growing voluntary sector indicates that regardless of the financial crisis, the Conservatives would have moved in this community-focused direction.³⁷³ The significantly reduced public funding during the economically challenging climate that proceeded the 2007 recession hit urban regeneration and renewal agendas. With capital funding no longer available, the Big Society was an ideologically driven political response that gave rise to locally-led solutions to urban change.

The Big Society is the latest iteration of a long line of public policies that seeks to promote ‘community-led’ regeneration as a panacea for urban and social problems. The rejuvenation of public space – sites of sociability and interaction – has been a key policy concern in the UK for over a decade.³⁷⁴ The positive effects of social capital is well known, further promoting the active citizenship of volunteering in enabling these locally-led, low cost alternatives³⁷⁵ and various initiatives targeting social cohesion and inclusion have considered the strategic role of public space.³⁷⁶ Civic participation,

³⁶⁹ Howell, S. (2012) *Grow Your Own Way: Taking a localist approach to Regeneration*. London: LGA: Localis.

³⁷⁰ Thatcher, M. (1983). TV interview for London Weekend Television. *Weekend World*. (“Victorian Values”) *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*. <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/105087> [Accessed Feb 4th 2017]

³⁷¹ Joyce, S. (2005) *The Victorians in the Rearview Mirror*. Athens.

³⁷² ‘Austerity localism’ is a phrase used by David Featherstone *et al* to describe the ambiguity of ‘Big Society, Small Government’. See Featherstone, D. Ince, A. MacKinnon, D. Strauss, K. and Cumbers, A. (2012) Progressive Localism and the construction of political alternatives. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 37 pp. 177-182.

³⁷³ See Hilton, M., McKay, J., Crowson, N., Mouhot, J-F. (2010) ‘The Big Society: civic participation and the state of modern Britain’ *History and Policy papers*. June 2010.

³⁷⁴ Office for the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) (2003a). Government Response to ODPM Select Committee Report on Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener. HMS, London.

³⁷⁵ Begum, H. (2003) *Social capital in action: adding up local connections and networks*. London: Centre for Civil Society and NCVO.

³⁷⁶ See Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), (2002). Living Spaces: Cleaner, Safer, Greener. ODPM Publications, Wetherby; ODPM, (2003a). Government Response to ODPM Select Committee

volunteering and feelings of improved wellbeing as a result have all been associated with strengthening a sense of community.³⁷⁷ In tackling “our social problems and increasing wellbeing”, the active citizenship and emotional capital of volunteering has been shown to improve physical and mental health³⁷⁸, particularly in older age groups. The emotional involvement of volunteering goes beyond improved wellbeing and reported increase in happiness,³⁷⁹ but extends to a diverse emotional repertoire including feelings of belonging, pleasure, sorrow and anger that motivates voluntary work to take place.³⁸⁰ The emphasis on ameliorating social tensions and promoting health and wellbeing through neighbourhood, community engagement is also a key feature of more general policy making around social inclusion.³⁸¹ Social inclusion is a policy objective common to cultural and economic forms of regeneration. However, there is a considerable body of research that demonstrates that community-focused cultural practices are effective on their own terms, rather than top-down policy-making determined to instrumentalise culture for various productive ends.³⁸²

As the new machinery of state-provision, the Big Society has been criticised as political cover for a wider ideological attack on the welfare state and public sector. Albrow argues that the Big Society functions as a “rhetorical intervention” and part of an attempt to rebrand the ‘nasty party’ stigma attached to the Conservative Party.³⁸³ Furthermore, the positive narrative of the Big Society could be viewed as a screen to hide the drastic public spending cuts, which Lee calls a “politics of deflection.”³⁸⁴ As the imagined future of the individual and community responsibility, the Big Society

Report on Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener. HMS, London; ODPM, (2003b) Creating Sustainable Communities: Making it Happen: Thames Gateway and the Growth Areas. ODPM, London.

³⁷⁷ Sense of Community Partners. (2004) *Exploring sense of community: an annotated bibliography*. Sense of Community Partners, Calgary.

³⁷⁸ See Luoh, M-C., & Herzog, A.R. (2002) Individual consequences of volunteer and paid work in old age: Health and Mortality. *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour*. 43, pp. 490-509 and Musick, M.A. & Wilson, J. (2003) Volunteering and depression: the role of psychological and social resources in different age groups. *Social Science and Medicine*. 56, pp. 259-269.

³⁷⁹ Borgonovi, F. (2008) Doing well by doing good: The relationship between formal volunteering and self-reported health and happiness. *Social Science and Medicine*. 66(1), pp. 2321-2334.

³⁸⁰ See Roberts, J.M and Devine, F. (2004) Some everyday experiences of voluntarism: Social capital, pleasure and the contingency of participation. *Social Politics*, 11(2). pp. 280-296.

³⁸¹ Bianchini, F., & CLES. (1988) City centres, city cultures: The role of the arts in the revitalisation of towns and cities. Manchester: CLES.

³⁸² Matarasso, F. (1997) *Use or ornament: The social impact of participation in the arts*. Stroud: Comedia.

³⁸³ Albrow, M. (2012) ‘Big Society’ as a rhetorical intervention’ in A. Ishkanian and S. Szreter (eds) *The Big Society Debate: A New Agenda for Social Welfare?* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar. pp. 105-15.

³⁸⁴ Lee, S. (2011) ‘We are all in this together’ The Coalition Agenda for British Modernisation”, in S. Lee and M. Beech (eds) (2011) *The Cameron-Clegg Government: Coalition Politics in an Age of Austerity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 4

represents a contradictory duality between deficit reduction and cuts to public spending and a promising, positive narrative.

The rhetoric of the Big Society is a double-edged sword. The Big Society's smiley-faced slogan is set against staunch criticisms of its ideological noxiousness. The blurred boundaries between the appearance of righteousness and the suspicion of an ulterior motive or agenda is presented in this chapter. Where the previous chapter dealt with big-ticket regeneration and architectural projects, this chapter hones into the emergence of colour on the smaller, community scale. The following section starts in the *favelas* of Brazil. Exploring the emergence of colour in community-based projects in the *favelas*, through to the most deprived part of Philadelphia, USA, to the repair of a town in Taiwan, this section sets up the context of this exploration of colour and rejuvenating the neighbourhood.

Urban acupuncture: Two artists in Rio

In the words of François Matarasso in *Use or Ornament?*, “tackling problems like youth unemployment, fear of crime and social exclusion is the right moment to start talking about what the arts can do for society, not what society can do for the arts.”³⁸⁵ Engaging and mobilising community members in acts of citizenship, the social impact of community participation in the arts awakens an enthusiasm around the active participation of people in cultural activities. Today, these cultural activities, promoting social cohesion, education, empowerment and wellbeing, can be observed in community initiatives centred on painting drab, urban spaces, reimagining the neighbourhood in multicolour.

Movements putting colour and communities at the fore of urban improvement have been particularly prominent in deprived areas. On an international scale, one of the most high profile community colour initiatives was based in two *favelas* in Brazil. Between 2007 and 2010, two artists, Jeroen Koolhaas and Dre Urhahn, colloquially known as ‘Haas and Hahn’, spent 18 months painting urban slums or *favelas*³⁸⁶ in Rio

³⁸⁵ Matarasso, F. (1997) *Use or Ornament? The social impact of participating in the arts*. Comedia: Bournes Green, Stroud.

³⁸⁶ The *favelas* of Brazil are notoriously dangerous. In 2002, an investigative journalist and producer for Brazilian television network *Rede Globo* visited the same favela settlement. His body was found burnt nine days later.

de Janeiro in order to “transform the living environment and instil pride in the people.”³⁸⁷ Jeroen is a Dutch illustrator who works for New Yorker magazine, and Dre an art director from Amsterdam. One of these *favela* settlements is Vila Cruzeiro, a community of around 60,000 people situated around 25 kilometres north of Brazil’s most famous beach, Copacabana. The artists had been drawn to these *favelas* as the subject of a hip-hop documentary they were filming, but on the last day, they asked themselves what the *favelas* would look like painted over into “one big piece of art.”³⁸⁸ Local non-government agency the IBISS Foundation, known in English as the ‘Brazilian Institute for Innovations in Social Healthcare’, who aims to help “the city’s most economically and socially excluded people”, were encouraged by the idea and its fostering of leadership and empowerment.³⁸⁹ Additionally, the organisation claimed “everybody here would pretty much love to have their house painted. It’s when a house is finished.”³⁹⁰ Using the shacks as a canvas, the final piece features a young boy flying a kite - which for the artists, represents hope - was completed in 2007 and gained significant global media interest.³⁹¹ Within a month, the artists, together with the local community, produced *Praça Cantão* (see fig 4.1) in 2010; a radiant real-life Cubism across the architectural space of the *favelas*, evocative of the abstract murals of Katharina Grosse.

The creative, socially-engaged practice of *favela* painting championed local people to be part of the process and practice of urban transformation. As strangers in a notoriously dangerous place, Haas and Hahn persuaded the local *favela* dwellers to allow them access and be part of the programme through the seduction of ‘lots of barbeques’.³⁹² Using a weekly barbeque to bring the neighbourhood together, the

³⁸⁷ Payne, S. (undated), Favela Painting: Giving pride to Brazil’s poor. *The Coolist*. Retrieved from: <http://www.thecoolist.com/favela-painting-giving-pride-to-brazils-poor/> [Accessed 8th July 2014]

³⁸⁸ Koolhaas, J. and Urhahn, D. (2014) Haas and Hahn: How painting can transform communities. Retrieved from:

https://www.ted.com/talks/haas_hahn_how_painting_can_transform_communities/transcript?language=en#t-46392

³⁸⁹ IBISS (2014) Retrieved February 10, 2015, from IBISS website (english),

<http://www.ibiss.info/english>

³⁹⁰ Comment from Nanko, an employee at the NGO in Vila Cruzeiro: Ibid.

³⁹¹ Later that year, esteemed Parisian artist JR completed a large scale work in a neighbouring *favela* in Rio, labelled *Women are Heroes* between 2008-2009, featuring a giant bric-a-brac of photos of the faces and eyes of local women from the community over and outside the *favelas*. See also Phillips, T. 2007: Notorious slum becomes open-air gallery. *The Guardian*. 9 February 2007. Retrieved here:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/feb/09/artnews.brazil> [Accessed 9th March 2013]

³⁹² Koolhaas, J. and Urhahn, D. (2014) Haas and Hahn: How painting can transform communities. Retrieved from:

prosocial and convivial practice of sharing food was crucial in enabling Haas and Hahn to integrate within the community and speak to them about their vision. Their technique paid off, and Haas and Hahn enlisted the support of local youths recruited by *Soldados Nunca Mais* program of the IBSS Foundation, trained them in painting, and together spent three months on *Boy with a Kite*.³⁹³ In 2010, during the planning for *Praça Cantão*, Haas and Hahn recruited and trained 25 local people to paint 35 houses over a 7000 square metre area.³⁹⁴



Fig 4.1 Haas and Hahn after their favela painting *Praça Cantão* in Santa Marta, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2010) Source: Graffart.

The success of their Brazilian initiative inspired the Philadelphia Mural Arts program in the United States, who asked Haas and Hahn if they would be interested in taking their painting initiative to North Philadelphia; one of the poorest neighbourhoods in the United States. Accepting their request, in 2011 Haas and Hahn moved to the town, creating individual designs with owners of the local stores and buildings in

https://www.ted.com/talks/haas_hahn_how_painting_can_transform_communities/transcript?language=en#t-46392

³⁹³ The IBSS *Soldados Nunca Mais* programme uses activities to break down social prejudices and encourage child soldiers to leave the drug trade.

³⁹⁴ Marc. (2010) *Praça Cantão: A new favela painting in Rio de Janeiro*. *Wooster Collective*. 12 May 2010. Retrieved from: <http://www.woostercollective.com/post/praca-cantao-a-new-favela-painting-in-rio-de-janeiro>. [Accessed 9th March 2013]

Germantown and Lehigh Avenues, recruiting a team of a dozen men and women who were trained as painters “and together they transformed their own neighbourhood, the whole street, into a giant patchwork of colour.”³⁹⁵ Known as the ‘Philly Painting’, the scheme was described as a “neighbourhood beautification project” with the goal to “mobilise the community to completely transform the commercial corridor and bring a new look to their neighbourhood: a social and artistic experimentation of urban acupuncture, beautification and economic stimulus of unprecedented scale.”³⁹⁶ Philly Painting was described as “weaving” together and “visually unifying the blighted corridor” of dilapidated facades.³⁹⁷ Haas and Hahn likened the engagement from the local community in achieving these goals to an orchestra, describing that “in a communal effort, together with people, you can almost work like in an orchestra, where you can have a hundred instruments playing together to create a symphony.”³⁹⁸ After the works had been completed, the city of Philadelphia gave each community painter a merit for their accomplishment.³⁹⁹



Fig 4.2 Haas and Hahn’s Philly Painting project (2011). Source: Creative States.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Philly Painting. (2017) Homepage. Retrieved from <http://www.phillypainting.org/>. [Accessed 20 February 2017]

³⁹⁷ See: <http://www.creative-states.org/articles/2015/1/haas-hahn-philly-mural-painting>. Accessed 13 September 2017.

³⁹⁸ Koolhaas, J. and Urhahn, D. (2014) Haas and Hahn: How painting can transform communities. Retrieved from:

https://www.ted.com/talks/haas_hahn_how_painting_can_transform_communities/transcript?language=en#t-46392

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

As conductors of urban and social change, Haas and Hahn's painting initiatives encompass emancipatory acts of Western philanthropy, community building and urban transformation. However, as demonstrated in the above examples, practices have a tendency to circulate within marginalised communities or deprived urban neighbourhoods, which are popular settings for the unfolding of community painting initiatives. Through these initiatives colour is constructed as a remedy for both urban and social problems, the structural and social issues within *favelas* communities generally remains unresolved, including an inadequate sewage system and larger racial and class issues.⁴⁰⁰ As such, community painting interventions have been criticised for their superficiality, merely concealing the wider social and urban problems underneath the coat of paint. Other concerns, including "slum tourism", a term to describe improving economic conditions by drawing state attention and long-term sources of income for those living in *favelas*, is a fast growing trend that can have negative rather than positive impacts on low income areas.⁴⁰¹ The voyeurism inherent in this form of tourism is criticised for allowing the rich to feel better about their own lives by comparing it to the poor.⁴⁰² Furthermore, favela tourism, coupled with the involvement of Westerners Haas and Hahn, could be criticised for expressing a neo-colonialist tendency.⁴⁰³ Using *favelas* as the backdrop to Haas and Hahn's project is complicated further when considering their goal of "redesign[ing] and rebrand[ing] a community as a whole", questioning the intentions behind their project.⁴⁰⁴

The discourses of social and urban change enabled by painting initiatives like Haas and Hahn's *favela* project invites participation and is focused on mobilising the communities themselves to transform their own communities. However, community painting initiatives like Haas and Hahn are complicated, criticised and fraught. Corporate engagement with community initiatives, often spearheaded by sustainability teams and brand strategists, have also begun to take note of the commercial potential of community colouring projects. In 2010, Coral, the Brazilian subsidiary of AkzoNobel, showed their support for the Haas and Hahn project by donating paint

⁴⁰⁰ Clarke, F. (2014) Crime and Punishment: Comments on a Violent Week in Rio. February 7th 2014. Retrieved from <http://rioonwatch.org/?p=13416>.

⁴⁰¹ Rolfes, M. (2010) Poverty tourism: theoretical reflections and empirical findings regarding an extraordinary form of tourism. *Geojournal*, 75(5), pp. 421-442

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Frisch, T. (2012) Glimpses of Another World: The Favela as a Tourist Attraction. *Tourism Geographies*, 12(2), pp. 320-338.

⁴⁰⁴ See: Back to Rio: 4 October - 29 October. Retrieved from <http://kallenbachgallery.com/backtorio/> [Accessed 6th July 2014].

and offering training to local people. Later that year, AkzoNobel announced their own iteration of colouring neighbourhoods. In the next section, I introduce the empirical focus of this chapter; global community painting campaign by world's largest paint manufacturers, the Dulux *Let's Colour* project.

Let's Colour: Introduction

In 2012, the town of Jia-Shian, Taiwan, fell victim of two serious natural disasters. According to the local people of Jia-Shian, “everything was destroyed.”⁴⁰⁵ After a lengthy process of rebuilding and cleaning, a global community colouring scheme, *Let's Colour*, donated paint to Jia-Shian to support its redevelopment. In a follow up case study, one volunteer explained:

When the first coat of paint had dried on the embankment walls, everyone was smiling... In the beginning, we thought it was a tough mission. The work looked plenty and difficult, the people were still depressed, too. But we all came together and persevered...More and more volunteers arrived and the colouring spaces got bigger as the smiling became laughing. Colour is the wonderful catalytic to refresh our town and mind. We are proud of ourselves and the whole result.⁴⁰⁶

The revitalisation of Jia-Shian is one of thousands of colourful interventions worldwide lead by international paint brand Dulux and their global *Let's Colour* project. Produced by Dutch multinational corporation AkzoNobel, Dulux are one of the largest brands of internationally available architectural paint.⁴⁰⁷ By transforming “grey and unappealing” spaces into “bright and colourful environments”, the project aims to “bring happiness to the lives of thousands of individuals.”⁴⁰⁸ Since the start of the project in March 2010, 755,156 litres of paint have been donated to projects around

⁴⁰⁵ Jia Shian riverside: Dulux Let's Colour case study:(2012) Retrieved from: http://www.letscolourproject.com/events/233/taiwan_riverside/ [accessed 9th March 2013]

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Initially aimed at wholesalers and decorators, the brand moved into the retail market in 1950 and delivered a memorable advertisement campaign in the 1960s with the introduction on the now iconic “Dulux dog” - a shaggy haired Old English Sheepdog - which continues to be used today.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

the world.⁴⁰⁹ According to Dulux, donated paint brings colour to “those who have challenging lives and activities that positively impact our local communities.”⁴¹⁰ By the end of 2014, AkzoNobel reported that 7 million lives were impacted by the campaign.⁴¹¹

Although a core aim of the *Let's Colour* campaign is to demonstrate the transformative nature of colour by engaging communities ‘on the ground’, *Let's Colour* is in fact part of AkzoNobel’s wider sustainability and resilience programme, Human Cities. AkzoNobel’s Human Cities programme:

... stems from the fact that a significant percentage of our business comes from products and services that are linked to the urban environment...the initiative is designed to help urban areas become more inspiring, energizing and vibrant for people across the world. We want to go beyond the purely functional or technological aspects and help cities become more human.⁴¹²

AkzoNobel’s claim that cities can be humanised through the vibrant energy of colour, and perhaps more specifically, *their* colour, can be scrutinised in a number of ways. The value of human action and creativity has humanistic roots; by engaging with communities to regenerate the urban environment, AkzoNobel uses a language of aspiration to suggest that communities can make places more “inspiring, energizing and vibrant.” However, mirroring Pratt’s finding on the politics and economic of cultural practices, economic innovation and competitiveness, initiatives like *Let's Colour* is as much of a ‘human’ intervention as it is an economic one.⁴¹³ AkzoNobel’s objective is a blur between the teleology of self-serving economic development and a socially-responsible scheme to animate cities.

⁴⁰⁹ The Let’s Colour Project is planned to run until 2020, however, it has remained dormant with no reported new activity since a completed project in Istanbul, 14th May 2015. On the UK *Let's Colour* webpage, the tab to nominate a neighbourhood space to be coloured was removed in 2015. Although Dulux do not provide a reason for this hiatus, Dulux’s phenomenal success with *The Color Run* brand, discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, could be a potential reason.

⁴¹⁰ Dulux, (2013) Homepage. Retrieved from: <http://www.letscolour.co.uk/information/about.jsp> [Accessed 5th May 2013]

⁴¹¹ AkzoNobel, (2014) Report 2014. AkzoNobel N.V. p. 69. Retrieved from: https://www.akzonobel.com/system/images/AkzoNobel_Report_2014_EN_tcm9-90769.pdf [Accessed 21 February 2017].

⁴¹² Ibid: 29.

⁴¹³ Pratt, A. C. (2008) Innovation and creativity. In J. R. Short, P. Hubbard, & T. Hall (Eds.), *The sage companion to the city*. London: Sage. pp. 266–297.



Fig 4.3 Promotional *Let's Colour* project material. Source: Let's Colour Ireland.

In addition to this economic and social focus, *Let's Colour* is a key feature of AkzoNobel's dedication to meeting urban challenges. More specifically, *Let's Colour* is used as a device to demonstrate their commitment to urban resilience. The four *Let's Colour* flagship project locations – Brazil, the UK, France and India – all feature in The Rockefeller Foundation's '100 Resilient Cities' programme. *Let's Colour* plays a key role in supporting the commitment AkzoNobel made to the Clinton Global Initiative in September 2014, helping “cities meet the challenges they face.”⁴¹⁴ Between 2014-2016, AkzoNobel aims to use the *Let's Colour* idea to contribute to special projects in these four flagship locations. In many ways, the architecture of the *Let's Colour* project was built of the foundation of business partnerships and commercialism, comprising of strategic, top-down decisions, and delivered as a programme dedicated to community-engaged change.

In each of the four flagship cities, Dulux recruited 'hit squads' to work with community groups to brighten up community and urban spaces. The results of each transformation was recorded on a blog, and later expanded into the digital realms of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube as open and direct channels to share the project with the public. The campaign quickly grew in momentum and attracted the interest of the

⁴¹⁴ AkzoNobel, (2014) Report 2014. AkzoNobel N.V. p. 69. Retrieved from: https://www.akzonobel.com/system/images/AkzoNobel_Report_2014_EN_tcm9-90769.pdf [Accessed 21 February 2017].

likes of “the governor of Bangkok...a girl in Kosovo [and] a community leader in Chile.”⁴¹⁵ Documentary filmmaker Andrew Lang took interest in the project and travelled with Dulux to record people’s spiritual, cultural and social relationships with colour in each of the four cities. The campaign documentary has since been viewed over 1.2million times.

Lang’s documentary on the first *Let’s Colour’s* project in Lapa, Brazil, paints an evocative picture of the way Dulux present the transformative nature of colour and its aspirational, lively character. During the film, a local Brazilian tells the camera “a place that is more colourful means it is better - it’s alive.”⁴¹⁶ The film moves onto Chilean ceramic street artist Jorge Selarón, who created one of Rio de Janeiro’s most distinctive landmarks, transforming all 215 steps of the Convent of Santa Teresa with brightly coloured tiles (see figure 4.4).⁴¹⁷ Jorge described colours as able to “bring joy wherever they are.”⁴¹⁸ Before the colouring of the staircase, the steps were “ugly...a danger place” but now after the colouring, it is “another place...an ecosystem.”⁴¹⁹ Around the staircase are small, graffiti-covered grey flats, which are targeted by the *Let’s Colour* team and the local community to change. The film introduces Maria José, a resident in Lapa “who lives in the grey house.” Maria, sitting on the stairs that Selarón painted, tells the documentary maker:

The front of my house is in a terrible state. It’s covered in graffiti. The painting has come at a perfect time. I know it’s going to look good...everyone in the house is going to help with the painting. Everyone is excited!⁴²⁰

The documentary reinforces the transformative potential of colour through the vitalist, hopeful knowledges of colour engendered by the local people featured in each of the documentaries in the four main cities. Linking back to AkzoNobel’s Human Cities programme, the inspiring, energising vitalism that populates *Let’s Colour’s* discourse is an essential part of the construction of its slogan, *bringing places to life*. Helping cities become more ‘human’ suggests that ‘humanising’ is not just achieved through a

⁴¹⁵ In *Let’s Colour* global campaign video, 2010. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vhj1vMjCuE>

⁴¹⁶ In the *Let’s Colour* Brazil documentary video, 2010. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9BdDifNO70>

⁴¹⁷ Shortly after filming the documentary, Jorge Selarón’s body was found on the same steps. The staircase is now often referred to as ‘Selarón staircase’ in memory of him. See Watts, J. (2013) Artist found dead on Rio mosaic staircase he spent 20 years creating. *The Guardian*. 10 January 2013.

⁴¹⁸ *Let’s Colour* (2010) Brazil Documentary. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9BdDifNO70>

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

process of interaction, engagement and the coming together of communities, but a process of giving places life and energy through *work*; the labour involved in humanising and energising space involves these interactions, engagements and the coming together of working bodies. The doxastic world of *Let's Colour* reproduces colour's vitalism. Returning to Jia-Shian, Taiwan for a moment, the first coat of paint made the community smile.



Fig 4.4 Video still of Jorge Selarón interview during the *Let's Colour* documentary, Brazil, sitting on the steps of the Convent of Santa Teresa. Source: *Let's Colour Brazil* documentary.

In the documentary on Lapa, Brazil, a community member tells the camera that a colourful place is “more alive.” As such, *colour* is as much a vibrant force as the humans working towards it in their painting. Reinforcing both the liveliness of matter and the working bodies of the community is crucial in the process and practice of *bringing places to life*.

Placing the *Let's Colour* movement in the British climate of the Big Society and cognate public policies around urban regeneration, I now move to the empirical context of this chapter; development of the *Let's Colour* project in the UK.

Transforming Broken Britain: *Let's Colour* in the UK

The brand is more than the physical colour: it's about engaging people with their surroundings and transforming communities. I think when people buy a brand, they want to feel good about it. So, if you can have a more thorough impact, then customers will think, 'This brand isn't just selling me stuff, but is consistently helping me transform my community'. There's a depth of association for that brand: you're known as that metaphor for transformation, and that leads to greater loyalty.⁴²¹

The Dulux *Let's Colour* UK project aims to "bring places to life" through colour.⁴²² Supported by the Let's Colour Fund and working with partner charity Groundwork, the *Let's Colour* project donates Dulux paint to communities around the UK. Groundwork is an environmental organisation working in the most disadvantaged parts of the UK.⁴²³ The UK stream of the project began in Slough, where AkzoNobel UK are based, spending one month colouring the local shopping precinct "from a drab grey environment to a shopping precinct full of vibrant colour with rows of brightly coloured shop shutters."⁴²⁴ Slough is a town with a much-maligned image; towers of grey, 1930s factories and the smell of pungent sewage works repelled the poet Sir John Betjeman so much that he wrote a poem calling for it to be carpet bombed.⁴²⁵ Like Tirana, the process of colouring the area also featured other urban initiatives, collaborating with the local police to have CCTV installed in the area, the opening of a new Saturday market for local residents and attracting new businesses to Slough.⁴²⁶

In 2013 Dulux streamlined the scope of their project to reflect the four main groups that consistently applied to the scheme: Schools and Nurseries, Charities, Community Centres and Sports Clubs. It has since expanded to include a version

⁴²¹ Simpson, A. (2014) Colour for Communities. *Greenfutures magazine*. 6th November 2014. Retrieved from: <https://www.forumforthefuture.org/greenfutures/articles/colour-communities> [Accessed 10th Feb 2017]

⁴²² See Dulux *Let's Colour* webpage. <http://www.letscolour.co.uk/information/about.jsp> [09th Mar 2016]

⁴²³ From Groundwork UK webpage: <https://www.groundwork.org.uk/> [Accessed 20 February 2017]

⁴²⁴ Dulux Let's Colour, (2011) Celebration of Let's Colour in Chalvey Slough. 15 March 2011. Retrieved from: http://www.letscolour.co.uk/projects/celebration_of_chalvey.jsp [Accessed 1 May 2014]

⁴²⁵ John Betjeman's poem about Slough in 1936 opens with the stanza: *Come friendly bombs and fall on Slough! It isn't fit for humans now, There isn't grass to graze a cow. Swarm over, Death!*

See Betjeman, J. (1937) Slough. In *Continual Dew*. John Murray.

⁴²⁶ Dulux Let's Colour, (2011) Celebration of Let's Colour in Chalvey Slough. 15 March 2011. Retrieved from: http://www.letscolour.co.uk/projects/celebration_of_chalvey.jsp [Accessed 1 May 2014]

colouring Britain “from top to bottom”; combining the Deloitte Ride Across Britain with *Let’s Colour* and colouring eleven communities from John O’Groats to Land’s End. The Dulux Let’s Colour fund is also used to support three other initiatives; by the Outward Bound Trust, an educational charity that offers challenging outdoor experiences for young and disadvantaged people⁴²⁷; Community Re-Paint, a paint re-use scheme where leftover paint is made available for local communities and individuals; and the Dulux Decorator Centre (DDC) Colouring the Community scheme, where paint and materials are donated to local community groups. The criteria for being able to apply for Community Re-Paint is based on what Community Re-Paint describe as “social or community need.”⁴²⁸

Across the UK, Dulux have anticipated that around 60,000 litres of paint will allow for the transformation of around 200 grey spaces nationwide.⁴²⁹ Communities apply to the scheme through the *Let’s Colour* webpage, filling out an online form where they describe the site in need of colour, how many volunteers they will engage, how long they expect the project to take and how many ‘lives’ they will colour, or impact. Dulux claim to donate paint to “projects we feel can make the biggest impact through colour.”⁴³⁰ The *Let’s Colour* project is framed by a language centred around wider discourses of health and wellbeing. This was highlighted in an interview on social sustainability with David Brunt, Global Environment and Sustainability Director at AkzoNobel’s headquarters in the UK, “At a higher level, the rationale for *Let’s Colour* or *Tu Decor* is that colour can actually have an impact on wellbeing. You work with the community to brighten up a place, and that may seem superficial, but bringing people together creates a lot of dynamic interaction.”⁴³¹ In the colour guide given to successful project nominations, Dulux reiterates that adding colour to communities can “help lift the mood of the nation” and reminds project leaders that the “real power of colour is that it not only rejuvenates a space, it can also change how people interact

⁴²⁷ Part of Dulux’s involvement includes offering an Apprentice of the Year for young painters and decorators; raising £120,000 towards the Dulux ‘Ride Across Britain’ in order to refurbish a site in Ullswater, Cumbria.

⁴²⁸ During an interview with one of the management staff of Community Re-Paint, he acknowledged that the criteria for being eligible for paint was problematic: “social or community need - that’s very difficult to define today. You could argue that I’m in social need because I only have one car and one house. I don’t have two houses and I don’t have lots of cars. Because people do.” Interview with Community Re-Paint, 6th March 2014.

⁴²⁹ <http://www.letscolour.co.uk/information/about.jsp>

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Simpson, A. (2014) Colour for Communities. *Greenfutures magazine*. 6th November 2014. Retrieved from: <https://www.forumforthefuture.org/greenfutures/articles/colour-communities> [Accessed 10th Feb 2017]

with and feel about that space.”⁴³² Directing urban transformation towards achieving a different ‘feeling’ in space, these logics imbue the *Let’s Colour* project with more than urban and social change, but installing an emotional change to the way these urban spaces now feel. As such, the project is presented as a way to alter the relationship between colour, urban space and experience; an idea that strengthens Dulux’s claim that overall, the *Let’s Colour* initiative can truly ‘transform’.

Negotiating the connections between people, place, wellbeing and branding, Dulux *Let’s Colour* presents itself as an empowering tool that claims to enable significant urban and social change. *Let’s Colour* and other initiatives such as Haas and Hahn draw on a reparative and enhancing language ranging from ‘acupuncture’, ‘lifting the mood of the nation’ and ‘bringing places to life’. However, these schemes are complicated in the sense that in many ways, they could be read in two different ways: as both thinly disguised exercises in marketing, or regeneration projects mobilising communities to transform grey neighbourhood space. In the next section I draw on empirical research from the *Let’s Colour* campaign in London to delve further into these questions of urban and social repair through an examination of the chromatic transformation of space, interrogating issues around the social agency of colour, community need and the grey imaginary.

Transforming Broken Britain: Ethics and politics

Andrew⁴³³, an employee for AkzoNobel, took over the management of the UK stream of the *Let’s Colour* project in January 2014. Andrew’s role is to manage a comprehensive database of all the projects, detailing the media coverage, completion, dates, contacts, area, contact at the local Dulux Decorator Centre, number of volunteers and ‘lives coloured’ - the metric Dulux use to record the impact of each project.⁴³⁴ At the time of our interview, the 2014 *Let’s Colour* scheme had successfully accepted 120 projects and they were in the midst of sorting through another batch of nominations. Interested in how projects are accepted and rejected, he details the

⁴³² Dulux (2012) Guide for local projects. Retrieved from: http://letscolour.ie/wp-content/uploads/2012/Dulux_Guide_for_local_projects.pdf [accessed 5th Feb 2016]

⁴³³ Pseudonym used.

⁴³⁴ This number is decided by the project leader in each application, and is an estimate of how many people will use and interact with the space they seek to colour.

selection process that is involved, describing the lengthy sifting and sorting of hundreds of applications over one or two days at the Tangerine PR headquarters in Manchester. In a team of three, they each go through their own random pile of applications, splitting them off into three further ‘decline’, ‘accept’ or ‘needs more information’ piles. During the selection process, Andrew and his colleagues at Tangerine organise each application into pre-defined categories, and automatically decline any that do not match up. Andrew admitted that he was worried about “the bad image they’ll get for rejecting.”⁴³⁵ This, he tells me, has made “the selection process kind of brutal.”⁴³⁶ He tells me that generally, they are checked against geographic, temporal, seasonal and category data in each application:

How it works is you’ve got the online submission form, people put in their information, Tangerine receive it and print it out. Each paper, it’s all squished together, so no breaks, name - location - everything. First thing we look for are projects in the UK only, obviously. We get applications from all over. The effort put into the application is an indicator of how good the project leader might be in completing the project. Secondly, timing. It *has* to be this year and nothing after September. ‘The Golden Period’ is June-Sept, perfect for summer. We check how much time they need to complete the project. Two weekends are preferable. The perfect answer is to say ‘when are you doing the project? Asap. How long will it take? 2 weeks.’ Sweet. Accept. Then location. We keep track of how many are being done in a certain location. Schools are huge. I’ll tell you why - Schools do well because parents buy the paper, then you create inter-school competition or other school interest. We get the least amount of charities applying, which is a shame. They’re more deserving.⁴³⁷

Since the project started, the programme received an unprecedented number of applications from four main sources: charities, community centres, sports facilities and schools. Situating these four categories within the political landscape of austerity localism, UK government cuts have had a devastating effect on their grant funding. Considering the funding cuts to these four areas, it is unsurprising that there has not only been high numbers of applications from these sections of society, but also that Dulux are specifically targeting the third sector as one of their priorities. However, he is quick to reiterate that above all, colour is central to all applications:

⁴³⁵ Interview with Andrew at AkzoNobel, Slough. 12th June 2014.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ During a follow up interview 12th June 2014, Andrew tells me that they give the project a two-month deadline from the day they receive the materials. Lots of people waited around 6 months. If they do not complete the project in 2 months, they breach the Terms & Conditions.

But colours are a big one. If they say, we want white, magnolia, gardenia, black, no. It's called the Let's Colour project for a reason. So the more colours, the better.⁴³⁸

Andrew's rejection of typically domestic colours - magnolia and gardenia - and the colours of modernist architecture and luxury - black and white - in favour of multicolour, goes against a long history of colour, taste, class and value, and the historiography of neutrality;⁴³⁹ in the words of Jean Baudrillard in *The System of Objects*, "the world of colour is opposed to the world of value."⁴⁴⁰ Instead, the object of paint is a commodity, determined by its exchange value and embracing the multicoloured values of *Let's Colour*. Through encouraging practicing colour, the *Let's Colour* project is seen as a mechanism to build confidence and not be afraid to use colour, linking back to its chromophobic associations:

If you want to use other colours with white then that's fine, but we try to avoid just white. White paint is a no-no. So if you want a project, and you're like I want to paint your entire building in white paint, then that doesn't, that's not colour. Everybody thinks 'oh white, paint your walls white, if you want to do up your house or sell your house, that's the colour to go with because if people come in they can always change it if they want to', but no-one really wants to do that. There's always magnolia, white, gardenia, really boring, muted colours. We're always trying to encourage people to think you've got your skirting boards, you doors, your window frames, that's where you can use colour. That's where you can experiment with colour without overtaking a space. And that will give you that confidence in using colour in the future.⁴⁴¹

Furthermore, in acknowledging the avoidance of colour, Andrew also argues that changing the colour of a place can also impact on sensory qualities like atmosphere:

In the UK, there is this avoidance of colour. But when it's experimented with, it completely changes the whole atmosphere. So I think people realise that, they think oh the weather's crap, what can I do to brighten things up - use colour.⁴⁴²

⁴³⁸ Interview with Andrew at AkzoNobel, Slough. 20th March 2014.

⁴³⁹ Young, D. (2004) The material value of colour: The estate agent's tale. *Home Cultures*. (1) 1. p. 6.

⁴⁴⁰ Baudrillard, J. (1996) [1968] *The System of Objects*. trans. James Benedict. London and New York: Verso.

⁴⁴¹ Interview with Andrew at AkzoNobel, Slough. 20th March 2014.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

The transformative potential of colour and its ability to change “the whole atmosphere” is given extra weight when placed in the context of the UK, where he addresses the dreary weather and the avoidance of colour. Using a language of change, Andrew highlights the impact of the campaign:

AA: We really preach this message that colour can change your life, it can change your story, and we want to inspire beautiful living spaces, and it sounds all fluffy and a marketing ploy, but really it has a huge impact, and people don’t realise it until they do it. We want to generate a social legacy and generate an unforgettable brand experience.

HP: What is a ‘social legacy’?

AA: As a company, we’re not just focused on selling paint. This [the *Let’s Colour* project] is more unique every time and authentic. So there has been some disagreements about what should be included in a press release. I personally think this is fine. But some people want to use this as more of a branding exercise than a CSR initiative. The way I see it is we are giving back into the community and showing that we care. It falls in line with everything else we do with sustainability. Our Board of Director’s bonuses are completely dependant on our sustainability performance.

While Andrew’s definition of ‘social legacy’ is unclear, the concept of legacy, as a powerful tool for social change and leaving a lasting impact is consistent with the *Let’s Colour* ambition of colouring “one million lives by 2020.”⁴⁴³ Untangling the idea of social legacy reveals the layers of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), brand experience and sustainability. Although Andrew makes clear that “giving back to the community” is central, tying this up on an emotional level to demonstrate Dulux’s “care”, the project is as much of an exercise in CSR as it is in both developing a brand experience and achieving sustainability targets. As a CSR initiative, the scheme enhances Dulux’s brand value and increases their reputational capital. As the product of neoliberalisation - particularly in deregulation and marketisation - the corporate social benefits of the scheme is crucial in reimagining Dulux as a brand that is not “just focused on selling paint.” With Directors’ bonuses at stake, the ‘responsibility’ of CSR is in the interests of the business as much as it is in the community:

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

Every year we have to improve in sustainability. It's one of the reasons I like working here. I don't feel like I'm working for a tobacco company or an oil company that just destroys the environment without even thinking about it.⁴⁴⁴

The ethics of sustainability is a key reason behind Andrew's involvement in the *Let's Colour* project. In addition to the sustainability targets in place, Andrew tells me there are PR objectives too, which bolster the campaign's good publicity:

The PR company [Tangerine PR] has targets too - 200 pieces of coverage. We want to get the key messages across: 'do you have a drab, grey dreary place in your community that you'd like to see transformed?'⁴⁴⁵

The *Let's Colour* project is dependent on the reproduction of the grey, dreary and drab imaginary of community space. Grey, for urbanist Richard Sennett, is a lexicon for 'dead public spaces'⁴⁴⁶. Situated within the political climate and austerity localism, the *Let's Colour* project is both intent on changing the dreariness of space through colour, but is also dependent on it. In transforming urban space, Dulux reclaims urban surfaces and community spaces, transforming them not only in the interests of the community but in the interest of advertising their own paints. This dualistic 'win-win', is characteristic of many CSR initiatives and gives AkzoNobel a platform to create change and promote their brand.⁴⁴⁷ In achieving this goal, and responding to the huge demand, Tangerine PR asked Dulux to hold more *Let's Colour* projects:

What does that mean for us though? What do we get out of it? They're obviously going to say the same thing: 'you get more PR' yeah yeah yeah, 'you'll colour more lives' 'yeah yeah yeah', as a company, like, what do we actually get out of it? Sure, in the short term, we get more PR coverage, but what is the long term impact that these projects are actually leaving on these communities? What does that mean for our brand?

Andrew suggests that the *Let's Colour* project might be so successful because of the DIY culture in the UK, stating that "you wouldn't get that in France or Spain" and the impact of the wider political landscape and *Let's Colour's* premise of "coming together

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ See Mitchell, D. (2003) *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*. The Guildford Press. New York. p. 138

⁴⁴⁷ Hamilton, T. (2011) Putting corporate responsibility in its place. *Geography Compass*. (5) 10. p. 711.

and wanting to make a change.”⁴⁴⁸ In addition, he states that “freedom of expression” is crucial, arguing that in the UK “people from different backgrounds coming together from different places, there doesn’t seem to be as many restrictions and boundaries.”⁴⁴⁹ However, despite being a global campaign, the scope of the project is limited. The map in figure 4.5 (below) shows the geographies of the *Let’s Colour* project between 2010-2017. While there are a clear population of *Let’s Colour* projects in Europe, North America and to an extent, South-east Asia, there is a dearth of projects in other large developed countries and regions such as Australia and Russia, or the majority of the developing African world. However, the map indicates a particular success in Brazil. Freedom of expression and the press in particular have been under threat in a number of countries across Latin America; the 2012 Freedom House rankings reflected a decline in freedom of expression.⁴⁵⁰ As one of the host countries of the *Let’s Colour* project in 2010, Brazil, and to an extent, much of South America is known for its colourful carnivalesque *blocos* and mural culture.⁴⁵¹ In 2016, Brazilian graffiti artist Eduardo Kobra created the world’s largest street mural, a 30,000 square foot kaleidoscopic *Las Etnias* (‘The Ethnicities’) in Rio de Janeiro’s old run-down port district. Kobra himself spent two days in jail as a teenager for *pichação* - a form of illegal artistic tagging - for one of his artworks. Another city where the *Let’s Colour* project has received consistently high numbers of nominations, is a city where the adage ‘if the walls could talk’ is invigorated in the political and religious murals of The Troubles in Belfast:

AA: A ridiculous amount of projects were in Belfast. They were really keen about it. And word must have spread like wildfire, because suddenly loads of applications we had were for Belfast.

HP: Quite a mural city, isn’t it?

AA: Exactly! It fits in really nicely.⁴⁵²

⁴⁴⁸ Interview with Andrew at AkzoNobel, Slough. 20th March 2014.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ Freedom House (2012) Freedom of expression in Latin America: New trends, Old challenges. Retrieved from <https://freedomhouse.org/event/freedom-expression-latin-america-new-trends-old-challenges> [Accessed 5th May 2016]

⁴⁵¹ *blocos* are parades led by a samba band.

⁴⁵² Interview with Andrew at AkzoNobel, Slough. 20th March 2014.



Fig 4.5 Map of *Let's Colour* projects from 2010-2017. Source:
www.letscolourproject.com

Rather than intervening and disrupting space, the Belfast example given by Andrew in many ways demonstrates the *Let's Colour* scheme seeking to 'fit in'. Murals in themselves are preferred by the *Let's Colour* scheme:

Colour is important, but design is equal. On the website I'm trying to work on getting a tab on how to paint a mural [...] we really push the mural...because it brings in that artistic element. Especially with children and in schools, they love things like that. Sometimes you get really nice letters from the school, or photos, or videos and it really [...] if you get something like that it really makes your day because you're like 'oh!' [smiles]⁴⁵³

The *Let's Colour* UK scheme collaborated with artists to produce murals pieces to advertise the project, including Marianne Shillingford, Dulux's Creative Director and "our colour and design guru" who puts together some "unbelievable things", and British designer Matthew Williamson, who partnered with Dulux to renovate the Ravensbourne Community Centre, South East London, in 2012.⁴⁵⁴ Although there is no direct imperative to enlist an artist in communities' *Let's Colour* projects, the Welcome Pack that successful projects leaders receive includes a 'Guide to Murals' as an aid including "tips, tricks and some previously completed murals as inspiration."⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Taken from fieldnote diary.

⁴⁵⁵ Interview with Andrew at AkzoNobel, Slough. 12th June 2014.

With such a strong focus on sharing projects across social media, these guides and artistic involvement suggests that the aesthetic quality of the work is still important, including awards for “The best Let’s Colour projects of the month” and “all this exposure”:

People vote for their best project. Whoever wins gets £1,000 cash and all this exposure. It generates more people to come to the site and we get a lot of traction from doing that.⁴⁵⁶

Coverage and Public Relations (PR) is crucial to the *Let’s Colour* campaign. Once a project has been completed, Andrew receives a notification of the advertisement of the projects through local press, targeting the local community to promote the local work that has been done:

Because it’s a community project, that’s where we try to get our coverage. People will read it as it’s relevant to them.⁴⁵⁷

Targeting local media sources to advertise the projects goes beyond relevance; it is in part responsible for enhancing civic pride through demonstrating practices of community engagement, voluntarism and altruism. At the time of our conversation, the *Let’s Colour* project now request ‘before’ pictures now as part of the process to help demonstrate the drastic changes that the colour has made to space, citing the importance of visually capturing the ‘impact’ of the change:

Sometimes when you’re selling into the media, the photography might not be good enough, so we might not get the coverage because the quality is taken off an iPhone or something. The application pack now includes ‘photography guidelines’ to let them know that basically the ‘better the photo, the better chance of it being featured’. We ask for pictures as much as possible, but sometimes you have to wait and that kind of takes a way from the whole idea. It’s like, what’s the point, then?⁴⁵⁸

The production of visual material to accompany the project is essential in both illustrating the ‘impact’ of change and also facilitating the mobility of these images

⁴⁵⁶ Interview with Andrew at AkzoNobel, Slough. 20th March 2014.

⁴⁵⁷ Interview with Andrew at AkzoNobel, Slough. 20th March 2014.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

across the digital realm; a strategy that has proven success for the scheme. For example, prior to taking over the project management of the *Let's Colour* project, Andrew's interest in the scheme piqued after he had seen the documentary filmed in one of the original locations, India, and was taken back by what he described as the 'impact' of the project:

They got everyone painting in this section of the city. It looked unbelievable, because everyone was so happy. They were so into it. The transformation was just unreal. You can really see the impact it had.⁴⁵⁹

Andrew's explanation of the success of the scheme has a distinct emotional thread running through people and place, tied together through community engagement. 'Seeing' the impact the transformation has embraces more than just visual communication, but reproduces the emotional impact of the project and the capacity colour has to impact on mood, feeling and wellbeing. The imagery looked "unbelievable, because everyone was so happy." As a scheme that draws particularly focus on the emotion of colour and change, Andrew reproduced tropes on colour's affective capacity on bodies:

Colour elicits emotions in people. That's exactly it. Colour can have many meanings, but it's culturally based. In certain countries colour could mean prosperity or good fortune, whereas in another country it could mean the complete opposite.⁴⁶⁰

He draws on a range of ontological positions in his understanding of colour's affective and polysemic, culturally symbolic construction. Colour's emotional value is a key feature in the *Let's Colour* scheme; throughout the campaign, using slogans such as 'bringing place to life' and 'get that colourful feeling' shifts between the emotional quality of place and the primacy of the body, mood and feeling.⁴⁶¹ In acknowledging the avoidance of colour, Andrew also argues that changing the atmosphere of a place though colour can also impact on the feeling of that place:

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ 'Get that colourful feeling' is mainly used to describe the campaign in Ireland. Retrieved from webpage: <http://letscolour.ie/> [Accessed 6th Mar 2016]

In the UK, there is this avoidance of colour. But when it's experimented with, it completely changes the whole atmosphere. So I think people realise that, they think oh the weather's crap, what can I do to brighten things up - use colour.⁴⁶²

The lively, transformative language of the *Let's Colour* project is constructed as a panacea for community and urban need in a climate of government cuts. For Dulux, the materiality of paint profoundly changes and influences space and the way people relate to it. In reproducing the grey imaginary, Dulux's project seeks to intervene in unloved, dreary pockets of urban space and improve them through a new, multicoloured identity. Thinking of colour as repair, these repairs go beyond the surface of the paint, altering the feel and atmosphere of a space and drastically reinvigorating them. Through the reproduction of colour as "feeling" and "life", the *Let's Colour* project reshapes how we experience newly coloured neighbourhood space, aligning colourful transformation with questions of wellbeing and community cohesion. Having traced the process of selecting projects and the core principles and motivations behind the *Let's Colour* project, I now turn to a closer examination of the community groups that have applied to be part of the scheme. In the next section, I explore the discourses and discriminations around colour and how 'need' is framed in these applications. Questioning *why* spaces are coloured and *how* their projects are presented to the *Let's Colour* scheme, the next section consists of a discourse analysis of the 2013 applications rejected by the *Let's Colour* selection committee.

Geographies of need: Rejected proposals submitted for the *Let's Colour* scheme, 2013

In 2013 there were a total of 675 applications to the *Let's Colour* scheme. Out of these, 134 were accepted, 25 were cancelled due to breaches of terms and conditions, and 535 were declined.⁴⁶³ The section that follows analyses these declined applications, summarising my findings and providing vignettes of some particular examples to illustrate how 'need' is framed, the discriminations around colour, as well as reference

⁴⁶² Interview with Andrew at AkzoNobel, Slough. 20th March 2014.

⁴⁶³ During an interview, Andrew informed me that the vast majority of the 25 cancelled projects was due to the project taking too long to complete, and as such, many were left unfinished.

to some of the selection committee's notes on nomination forms where they have been annotated.

Applying for the scheme is through a simple online form, accessible from the main *Let's Colour* webpage. The form asks for the following information, before being sent directly to Tangerine PR:

- Contact details
- Brief description of the project
- Interior or Exterior
- When will the project be taking place
- How many peoples lives will be coloured
- How many volunteers
- What colours are likely to be used
- Where they heard about the project.

When examining the nomination forms, codes pertaining to key information, handwritten in biro, highlighted significant themes that could be easily identified. On many nominations, a simple 'x' or 'no', indicated a declined project, where others had 'decline' written more clearly over them. In one nomination form submitted by Warrington's Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), the project lead had indicated a desire to use "white/cream", which the selection committee underlined twice and wrote "declined" in large letters on the bottom of the form. The RSPCA project leader for this project uses a vitalist language to describe how the paint would rejuvenate the centre:

Our animal centre provides a home for dogs, cats and small animals whilst we rehabilitate them and find them a permanent home with a loving family. The outside of our kennels and the inside of reception area need to be painted but we haven't got the money to buy the paint. The paint donated would be used to brighten up our reception area for our customers and to brighten up the kennels for our dogs.⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶⁴ This example, as well as all the others that follow in this section, are all extracts from declined *Let's Colour* applications 2012-2013.

The above passage is a useful example to demonstrate the dominant discourses and themes that populate many of the 535 rejected *Let's Colour* applications. In light of current austerity measures affecting the third sector, financial restraints repeatedly featured in project descriptions. Applications often use of an emotional vocabulary to describe the work that the centre does, “find[ing] them a permanent home with a loving family” enhancing the passage’s impact through the use of moving description. Furthermore, vulnerable groups and animals were popular subjects matters, and were often presented in an emotive manner to effect sympathy. Connected to this sympathetic thread, many of the nominations were written as pleas, highlighting the hard, good work that they complete on a daily basis and situating this as a worthy reason to receive paint from the *Let's Colour* fund:

The building is bright, bold and fantastic! However, it stands very close to our old, tired looking and a little worn classroom. We hope to breathe some life into it by brightening the exterior and interior to match our existing new build [...] Our children need your help to enjoy coming to school even more! Please help!

We are a tiny primary school in Derry, Northern Ireland [...] our school is now at the stage where it needs a little colour injected into it [...] the building has worked hard BUT now deserves a little love and attention. We would be grateful if you could consider our school as a place to colour.

[We] spent a lot of money doing it up, but something we are struggling to do is raise funds to buy paint to make the place look better.

Hi we are a wellbeing centre in Telford I am writing to you today as were in a period of austerity and the young people I work with have expressed an interest in working collaboratively to create a place that they can call a home as opposed to a place where they lay their head. In order to do this I am seeking donations of decorating products such as wall putty and paint as these are luxuries the young people are unable to afford themselves due to their own personal circumstances and the low income they are struggling to survive on. A home is something that can be taken for granted, it is something that can be created to be unique to a persons personal taste, it can be a place that creates a sense of security and belonging, its personal, a place you can call your own [...] But more can be done, they can be made where the young people can where the young people feel safe and secure, where they enjoy living and would want their friends to come and visit a place they can be proud of. This simple act would ultimately have an impact on their self-esteem and mental health allowing them to positively achieve and create a better future for themselves.

When describing the site, these are often foregrounded by a description of the worth of their organisation and are imbued with emotion. Then often involve mention of animals, vulnerable groups such as senior citizens, the mentally ill or the homeless. Making these groups a feature of their application is a crucial part in reproducing the ‘need’ for colour as a remedy. Geographically, when describing the neighbourhood spaces, requests made the connection to colour and new life a critical feature of their pledge, often likening deprivation to community hostility like in the following excerpts:

The area we are based is the most deprived area in Norfolk. The building needs a good layer of paint to make it more welcoming and colourful for the children and members of staff.

Through the suggestion that colour can change social and urban space, colour-as-rejuvenation was often directly connected to altering peoples experience with space:

The colours we have at present are very drab, most of the walls are faded and the paint is flaking off. We want to provide a our users with a fresh, uplifting, and clean environment to work in to make to make their learning and participation a more enjoyable experience.

A nomination by a Youth Club in Norwich went as far as describing their current decoration as “foul.” In comparison to these appeals to vitalise space, descriptions of the current state of each site paints a bleak picture not only of the material surroundings, but on political, ethical and emotional level:

We are a Scout group in Staffordshire and realistically I know a coat of paint here and there will lift the hall from its quite gloomy current look.

The outside is grey with wood trim, typical council style.

We have a team of enthusiastic volunteers who are willing to revamp some of the more deprived areas of the town centre [...] The paint will be used to brighten up the wall at the car park which currently looks very messy and has a lot of graffiti on it [...] It will become a bright and positive space for residents and will be filled with messages of hope and recovery in such difficult times.

Colour’s ability to alter user experience was a key feature of many applications, particularly those centred around improving healthcare space as helping combat

associations with it as a space of fear: One project looking for paint to refurbish a hospital described this effect:

Paint would give the department a fresh and clean look that would appeal to children and make coming to hospital a less scary and daunting experience.

Another hospital, based in Middlesex described the purple of their walls as negatively effecting users. In an attempt to conceal the ‘fears’ of the hospital, colour was viewed as a way to alter the feeling and appearance of the hospital:

In need of a fresh lick of paint... Currently we have purple walls and it is very *boring* for children coming into our department. We would use the paint to make the department welcoming and friendly and look less like a hospital.

Within these schemes, there is a clear discrimination against certain colours. Applications were rejected purely on the grounds of their colour choice. Echoing Andrew’s earlier remark – “it’s called Let’s Colour for a reason” - *Let’s Colour* shun the ‘colourless’ in their schemes. For example when responding to the question ‘what colours are likely to be used?’, a theme emerges in decisions to reject:

Cream and brown as these are neutral decline - colours

Magnolia and white decline - colours

Primary colours with white and black [underlined] decline

Red, black, magnolia decline - colours

Cream mainly, purple and green decline - colours

Magnolia and one other decline - magnolia

White pale blues, pinks, and light pastel shades decline - white, pales

Cream/pastel decline - colours

Magnolia and pale yellow decline - magnolia

Neutral decline - colours??

Cream/white - no colours

Lilac and white emulsion - NO

Shades of yellow and neutrals, matt and gloss - no on colours!

Whites, creams, and then some bright ones - decline

Paints such as white, magnolia, pastels and pales, are, for *Let's Colour*, not 'colour'. At times, applications featuring white and cream are explicitly coded as having 'no colours'. These non-colours bear no relation to the *Let's Colour* project and as such, many projects requesting any of these are rejected outright on the basis of their lack of colour in the Dulux imagination. Often, nominations made direct reference to Dulux paints, claiming "the initiative would have a real boost painted in your period colours range." In contrast to the example of non-colour, many projects were particularly unspecific in their colour decisions:

Q: What colours are likely to be used:

All colours to brighten up the place

Full spectrum of base colours

Any we can get our hands on!

Lovely bright colours ☺

About 3 gallons of yellow!

Many projects incorporated the animated quality of colour into their proposed titles, including "Project Sunshine!" 'A Brighter Future' and "Make it Bright, Make it Happy." When describing the ways colour impacts space, many applications use a vitalist language to frame their requests:

Please help breathe a new lease of life into this tired building!

Invigorate the building...

...it would give the centre a new lease of life...

...could do with some lively colours on the walls.

We want to liven it up and modernise it.

The presentation of the need for colour, through discourses of emotion, demonstrates one effect of financial cuts on the third sector and community groups. In their application for free coloured paint, colourful paint is deemed a luxury. Opposed to modernist times where white and black were esteemed markers of opulence, whilst the *Let's Colour* programme does not go as far as to reimagine paint as splendour, it is

clear that for many community organisations, it is key part of potential renovation plans that many already cannot afford.

For the fortunate 134, just six projects were based in London in 2014. In the next section I briefly detail two other community colouring initiatives in London and provide an account of the six successful London *Let's Colour* projects, honing in to one project in greater depth.

London: wider colour schemes and initiatives

London has provided a popular backdrop for a range of different community-focused painting initiatives. Trees for Cities are a charity based in London dedicated to planting urban trees. As one of a range of different volunteering opportunities provided by the charity, in 2013 Trees for Cities teamed up with Australian artist Konstantin Dimopolous to produce a striking new intervention in the heart of London. The trees in Festival Gardens, which surrounds the iconic St Paul's Cathedral, were painted a bright, cobalt blue. Engaging with volunteers, who regularly work on Trees for Cities initiatives, the 'Blue Trees' project used colour to reinvent and turn our attention to London's urban trees, which "are taken for granted and in decline" (see fig 4.6).⁴⁶⁵ In Maplin Street, Mile End, a community 'street painting' project on 2nd July 2014 brought together residents living on the "forgotten street where small-crime and violence is taking place."⁴⁶⁶ The project, dubbed a "street rug", a long pink hopscotch, designed to signal to the surrounding community that improvements to the street are starting (see fig 4.7)⁴⁶⁷

Returning to Dulux, in 2013 there were 5 successful projects in wider London. Oakhill House in Reigate, Surrey a supported living facility for individuals with mental health problems or issues with drugs or alcohol, nominated their project because "certain areas of the facility had become drab and uninspiring due to daily wear-and-tear."⁴⁶⁸ Five volunteers painted the interior walls with pastel shades of tangerine and

⁴⁶⁵ Conversation with Sharon, Trees for Cities. 12th November 2014

⁴⁶⁶ See Shuffle Festival blog (2014) *Rethinking Maplin Street*. May 8th 2014. Retrieved from: <http://www.shufflefestival.com/blog/2014/6/2/bpdqfltbcc69xgjwec9qtc8ej2oeif> [Accessed 6th July 2015]

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁸ Conversation with a project leader, Oakhill House. 18th June 2014.

green to help create a “calm and cheerful atmosphere.”⁴⁶⁹ In East London, Docklands Sailing and Watersports Centre, Isle of Dogs, used the paint to create a colourful ‘wet classroom’ space for young people. “It was relatively dreary looking for something that needed to be relatively inspirational and educational... [before] when you would say to the kids ‘we’re going to the classroom they would go ‘ugh’.”⁴⁷⁰



Fig 4.6 The Blue Trees, London.
Source: Glass half full.



Fig 4.7 Maplin Street painter.
Source: Shuffle Festival.

The site before was described as “a big grey partition wall, with some yellow industrial looking paint.”⁴⁷¹ Watford Community Trust, part of Watford Football Club, used the *Let’s Colour* initiative to engage young people who were involved in the National Citizens Service (NCS) scheme, a programme for 15 to 17 year olds to “take on new challenges and learn new skills.”⁴⁷² The project involved 15 young volunteers designing artwork to paint three garage doors. They believed they were successful in their application because their proposal involved collaboration with NCS “a charity helping a charity.”⁴⁷³ Another project in East London, a mural outside a nursery, in Canning

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁰ Conversation with a project leader, Docklands Sailing and Watersports Centre. 18th June 2014.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² See National Citizen Service (2017) The Challenge webpage. Retrieved from: <http://www.ncsthechallenge.org/> [Accessed 7th July 2014]

⁴⁷³ Conversation with a project leader, Watford Community Trust. 9th July 2014.

Town was awarded a £1,000 cash prize for ‘Project of the Month’. Mokšliukas Nursery, part of the Lithuanian Christian Church, created a London-themed mural on the gable end of the building as a tribute to the city.⁴⁷⁴ The last successful *Let’s Colour* London project I turn to is a new community arts centre in Barking, called Studio3Arts, which I will now examine in greater depth. In the following section, I explore Studio 3 Art’s motivations behind applying to the *Let’s Colour* scheme, and finally, provide an ethnographic reflection on my own involvement with the second phase of the art centre’s new look.

Studio 3 Arts

Studio 3 Arts is a registered charity and community arts practice based in the Galleon Community centre on Boundary Road, Barking, London. Their mission is to be at “the forefront of socially-engaged, co-creative artistic practice in North East London and West Essex”, producing art that is “accessible, exciting and transformative.”⁴⁷⁵ Studio 3 Arts provides various creative activities including theatre, dance groups, digital performance and larger-scale public art projects. Although the organisation itself has been active for over 25 years, they only recently moved to the Galleon Community Centre, which used to be the home of Barking’s local Bingo hall. The interim artistic director of Studio 3 Arts, who initially nominated the project, said:

When we moved into the Galleon Community Centre we knew a lot of work needed to be done to transform it into a creative and dynamic space. We try to add colour to people’s lives with creativity, so it made sense to add colour to our walls, too...Participation and inclusion are at the heart of everything we do at Studio 3 Arts, which is why we got as many people as possible involved in every stage of creating our new look. I think we’ve made a great environment that should encourage local people to come and express themselves together.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷⁴ See Let’s Colour (2014a) London Calling! Mural makeover at local nursery. Retrieved from: http://www.letscolour.co.uk/projects/mokšliukas_nursery.jsp [Accessed 7th August 2014].

⁴⁷⁵ Take from Studio 3 Arts homepage. Retrieved from: <http://www.studio3arts.org.uk/studio-3-arts/> [Accessed 9th August 2014]

⁴⁷⁶ See Let’s Colour (2014b) Underwater mural makes splash at local childrens centre [sic]. Retrieved from: http://www.letscolour.co.uk/projects/galleon_community_centre.jsp [Accessed 9th August 2014]

After receiving confirmation of their successful application in July 2013, the local Dulux Decorator Centres in Barking dispatched bold shades of blue, black, red and yellow paint to help paint the centre with a motif based on the Studio 3 Arts logo. The logo is an abstract pattern of bright, modernist blocks interlocking to forming a star shape, and was created by a friend of the organisation, artist Maria Slovakova.

I met with Maria and Will who work at Studio 3 Arts. After losing government grant money due to austerity measures affecting community centres, the local council, Barking and Dagenham, provided Studio 3 Arts with the Galleon Community Centre rent-free on the condition they paid for the upkeep of it:

But when they got it, it was a very bland, very dour, community centre with just sort of grey walls... kind of horrible colours. You know? It had a lot of potential, but you had to see it. It was really depressing to be here. It was mostly used for old people playing bingo and that's about it. As we're an arts charity and it's all about creating arts engagement with youth mainly, our main thing is building arts engagement in areas where there isn't such a big thing, if you live in central london you have access to galleries and access to the theatre all the time, but if you're living more east, the way I think of it is anywhere east of Shoreditch, that engagement isn't there. Arts have the potential to change people's lives. So we wanted to make - as this building is now ours, we wanted to 1 make it feel like home, and 2 make it kind of reflect how we see ourselves as an organisation. And hopefully put that across to anyone who comes in the building, to make it a bright, friendly welcoming place. And that was the idea behind it.⁴⁷⁷

Given the Galleon Community Centre by the Council as 'their Hub', Will described the urge to re-paint the space in order to make it

...feel like it is *that* kind of place, feel like the kind of welcoming place you can just come into. It had to be complete overhaul of the entire building.⁴⁷⁸

With no budget, Will and his colleague Luke looked into funding and came across the *Let's Colour* project. The group applied, and within a number of weeks found out that they got it. Rosie, who currently manages Studio 3 Arts, called Maria to ask if she could help and got her to come in and have a look at it:

MS: I was like wow, this needs repainting completely. That was my first

⁴⁷⁷ Conversation with Maria at the Galleon Community Centre, 22nd June 2014.

⁴⁷⁸ Conversation with Will at the Galleon Community Centre, 22nd June 2014.

impression. Literally ‘ok, this needs to be done properly’

MS: - but the colours were different. These are my colours, in a way. This is my signature coming across, with their logo.⁴⁷⁹



Fig 4.8 The interior scheme, Galleon Community Centre. Source: Maria Slovakova.

As a first impression, the telling remark that the repainting needs to be done ‘properly’ engages with the expert knowledges encountered in Chapter 3. In order to do the job properly – or artistically – Maria consulted with manager Rosie, also an artist, and they worked on developing the scheme together. After a few small tweaks, the idea was realised. Phase 1, renewing the inside space (see figure 4.8) took six months and finished in March 2014. Phase II involves painting the outside of the building, with the leftover paint from *Let’s Colour* and is planned to start that day. The outside design involves painting the three exterior walls around the front of the building, with a medium sized mural on the east side:

Will: I remember there was a conversation about not going too bright on the outside.

⁴⁷⁹ Conversation with Will and Maria at the Galleon Community Centre, 22nd June 2014.

HP: What was the concern about parrot colours?

MS: It's also the surroundings as well. I mean it needed to be subtle. If you look at it, it kind of introduces you to the outside in a way, but it doesn't give it away, you know? So in a way you have a sort of surprise, as well. That was part of it.

Will: We still had to fit in with the estates around us -

MS: Yes yes -

Will: We couldn't just be this bright, mass of a building when everything around you is brick and grey.⁴⁸⁰

In many ways, Maria and Will's rejection of bright colours goes against the principles of the *Let's Colour* programme; not simply because in practice, they used blue, red and yellow on the inside, retaining the darker hues and some blue for the outside, but because of their scheme's emphasis on *grey*. The greyness of the exterior walls, even in the unfinished state at the time of our interview, challenges *Let's Colour's* combative campaign against grey. Furthermore, the parrot colours, in their bright, tropical associations, are seen as completely unsuitable in the urban geographies of Barking and Boundary Road. Rather than a disruption, re-painting the exterior walls subtly was a considered decision in respect of their surroundings. Putting space and community ahead of colour, Will and Maria summarised a potential criticism of *Let's Colour* interfering in neighbourhood space, rather than positively colouring it; the rejection of 'colour for colour's sake':

Will: It's really a matter of making people feel more welcome, and creating a welcoming space -

MS: - and also comfortable. If they're used to this, then you don't want to make them do what they don't want to do. I think that was part of the reason behind the grey. That you don't show people too much, by what you're doing. Because if they've been there for years, they're happy with their neighbourhood it's their own way, you shouldn't interfere that much. We are a community arts organisation, we don't believe in doing anything unless it involves the local community, because you can't just throw art at people and ask them to like it. You couldn't just do the building and just go 'look, deal with it', you've got to involve people, *make* people feel like it's *their* space, it's a space that they've had a hand in and they've had a say in, and that's the best way to get involved, get colour in a space [...] make them part of the process"⁴⁸¹

The painting of the Galleon Community Centre emphasises the role of communities

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

and is a reminder that in all *Let's Colour* projects, the balance between colour, communities and space is not made equal. Encompassing the values of community engagement and inclusion, after the interview, I asked Maria if I could in any way help paint with her, and she obliged without hesitation:

MS: Go on then. Have you got your painting clothes? [Laughter]

Will: But seriously though, if you want to muck in...come tomorrow...

MS: Please do! I'd be really happy...

Painting the Barking Bingo Hall

A pile up of bright red London buses along Station Parade halt at a zebra crossing as pedestrians stream towards Barking market; a lively east London general bazaar, selling goods that embrace the multiculturalism of the city. I am offered a CD of the newest reggae talent, picking up the piscine aroma of fish further along, knock off price tops and trousers, and eventually the beautifully sweet scent of bowls of £1 fruit ripening in the sun. It is a Tuesday – Barking Market day – and Barking is alive with the emblematic noises, smells and sights of an east end market encounter.

A short walk after exiting the market and I am on Gascoigne Road, home to Barking's large Gascoigne Estate which contextualises the neighbourhood I enter.⁴⁸² Eerily quiet, the estate looks neglected, decorated with piled up rubbish and graffiti. Joining Gascoigne Road is Boundary Road; another quiet street with predominately low rise council houses on each side of the road in a dull Red Stock brick – the type of brick I remember many architects telling me during my research is a 'London Brick' – few cars and even fewer people. The Galleon Centre is on the left as you walk down the road, and in its half grey, half black, half completed state, is the brightest building on the street.

Maria is already painting one of the walls and as I approach, raises her head up high to see underneath the lid of her baseball cap. She has laid out four cans of paint, two dark grey, two light grey, and a tray containing a teaspoon, a selection of brushes, a spatulas, tape, a whisk, water, rollers and a toothbrush.

"Could you start on the ladder?" Maria asks.

Maria has a fear of heights and as such, has left the small windows that wrap

⁴⁸² A year after this fieldwork, plans were made by Barking Council to demolish the eastern side of Gascoigne Estate for the provision of 421 new homes, a new energy centre, medical centre and open public space.

around the top of the building, just below the roof, unpainted. She points to the ladder, hands me a roll of black sandpaper and a sharp edged tool and asks me to first file down the old white paint before taping the edges and painting over in a maximum of two layers of black paint.

“Be careful though, that paint is expensive so please don’t drop any of get any on the wall! And please, the ladder...you’re not scared of heights too, are you?” Maria asks.

I shake my head, although the ladder has an uncertain wobble to it making me feel slightly anxious. Maria is quiet to begin with; conversation between us was not flowing yet. However, there was one thing on my mind - where was everyone else?⁴⁸³

In the four days that I spent painting with Maria, I was the only volunteer working on the wall. To the rear of the building, a worker from Studio 3 Arts was touching up the extension of the interior scheme, which flowed into the rear garden, and on the west side of the wall featured the beginning of another project, an edible garden, which was occasionally tended to by employees. During Phase I of the project, working on the inside scheme, they had around ten volunteers, many of whom were already employees or volunteers of Studio 3 Arts. Maria told me that because they were quite concerned about the reaction of the local community members when they first started repainting the centre, they held off officially opening the studios until the interior was “ready to be shown off” even though they had been in the building for over 6 months.⁴⁸⁴ This meant they could ensure they “let people know we existed in the right way.”⁴⁸⁵ This affected the level of volunteers they took on, because Maria were concerned that if they had too many, the chances of the volunteers thinking, “it looked rubbish, it doesn’t look great yet” increased.⁴⁸⁶

Reducing the number of volunteers, rather than increasing them, was seen as more efficient for the painting of the Galleon Centre. For Maria, it allowed people to “crack on” rather than “have a party”, opting for the option of having “less, more dedicated volunteers, than lots and lots of people mucking in.”⁴⁸⁷ “I felt it should be

⁴⁸³ Fieldnote diary entry: The first day at work. 23rd June 2014.

⁴⁸⁴ Fieldnote diary entry: Conversation with Maria. 23rd June 2014.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ Fieldnote diary entry: Conversation with Maria. 25th June 2014.

done properly”, Maria added.⁴⁸⁸

Doing the job correctly was central. Having been well versed in the discourses of life, energy, vitality, improvement and the emotional grammars of happiness, smiling and bonhomie located in the colourful case studies I had spent time researching, day one of painting Galleon was hard, laborious work. It was a technical job that required concentration, a job that I had no prior experience of and a job that I was not expecting to be so tough:

I spent five hours up the ladder, scraping and sanding, before I could apply my first layer of paint. I could hear In my *Let's Colour* imaginary, this was going to be great fun, convivial, rewarding, surrounded by other volunteers, building rapport. Instead, it was just me, which made the job take significantly longer.⁴⁸⁹



Fig 4.9 Painting the exterior of Galleon Community Centre.

Source: Author's own.

On the second day of painting, Maria described one of the volunteers that helped during Phase I:

She was really amazing. She didn't take breaks and would have a whole wall done in what felt like minutes. She was really into it and had never done

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹ Fieldnote diary entry: The first day at work. 23rd June 2014.

[painted] anything like that before. She was terrified at the time, and I admired that. It was very strange to see how people can be scared of painting. But they went through it. It's amazing.⁴⁹⁰

Maria often referred to the production of the coloured wall as “labour”, “work”, and “discipline”, highlighting the functional purpose of the project. Maria’s description summed up her vision of the ideal community volunteer; a worker, persevering and efficient. Although terrified at the start due to her inexperience, the volunteer’s engagement with painting towards the end is an example of building a new skill, or least becoming more adept at it. The fear of painting is something I experienced too:

There were certain rules I had to follow. Firstly, I had to be extremely careful of the paint. Every time I used it, I had to put the lid on immediately to prevent it drying out. I could not take the whole pot, just the palette, in case it spilt. Care must be taken not to get the black paint on the grey part of the wall, or worse, on the window, so I was given tape to keep the edges clean, but the tape was running out too and I had to be careful with the amount I used. The wall was really chalky which made it difficult to paint, creating three layers before the black was the ‘right’ black. Black got on my hands and would not come off even after washing. The brushes had to be cleaned if they were being put down even for a short time, or they would be ruined. Remembering all these tactics made the job even harder, because I wanted to do a good job.

During my time with Maria, I not only became a more confident painter, but spending time working together to achieve the same goal helped us get to know each other. She told me about her memories of her homeland, the Czech Republic, her big break in New York and her company, Peace & Cookies. We often took breaks to the ice cream shop near Barking station to cool us down when the days were hot. By learning how to paint, I gained a new skill and also felt part of Maria’s artistic world; her ‘apprentice’ as she once joked. Once I had begun to prove myself as a painter on the second day, Maria told me that tomorrow, I could help her with the centerpiece, the mural:

During my time preparing and painting the window ledges on days one and two, Maria was creating the stencil for the mural piece, which fits in a square overlooking the small car park in a discrete part of the Galleon façade. It features four main characters, three male and one female, arranged like totem poles. “This is me” Maria tells me, describing her own caricature-esque, youthful

⁴⁹⁰ Fieldnote diary entry: Conversation with Maria. 25th June 2014.

artistic style.⁴⁹¹ She shows me her design, which she has been working on in her journal. Each character was stenciled in black and white and it was my role to help Maria layer on a deep blue background.

The Galleon Centre was alive today. Groups of student dancers, musicians and actors passed in and out of the Galleon doors. During our painting, we were treated to the music of dance rehearsals unfolding in one of the studios through the windows and the smell of pizza that some of the students had ordered in for lunch. It was a hot day, so many of them came to eat outside on the kerb. One of the dancers peered around the corner to see what we were doing as she ate her sloppy slice of pizza. “It looks so cool! Why do they look so sad though?” she asks.⁴⁹²

Maria begins to explain that Rosie, the manager of the centre, had voiced concern that the characters on the mural and asked if there was any way they could be made to “look a bit happier”:

This is just the way it is. It’s art. It’s my art.⁴⁹³

The serious, almost bemused expressions on the faces of the characters in the mural (see fig 4.10) are distinctive to Maria’s art, rather than conforming to the premise of *Let’s Colour* or Rosie’s impressions. The mural piece is still “her” art, even if I was part of co-producing the piece, the separation between artist and volunteer was clear. I took on roles that required little to no artistic merit (sanding, painting high up and less visible areas) to the coats of blue around the figures of the mural. Together we were creating a small part of the overall renewal of the Galleon Centre. No single aspect of our work could be attributed to ‘creating’ happiness or life. It is the summation of the work, time and the dedication of volunteers, *together with* colour, that is *part of* and not the *creation of* the practice and performance of repair through the painting of Galleon.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² Fieldnote diary entry: The third day at work. 26th June 2014.

⁴⁹³ Fieldnote diary entry: Conversation with Maria. 26th June 2014.



Fig 4.10 The mural. Source: Author's own.

Concluding thoughts: The *Let's Colour* panacea

Developing the concept of repair in the previous chapter, in this exploration I draw on the operation of and relief enacted by repair; from 'urban acupuncture' to 'bringing places to life', community colouring schemes engage local people as the workforce of repair. This section demonstrates how neighbourhood repairs are entwined with a diverse range of emotional, urban wellbeing and vitalist discourses. I argue that these programmes are presented as a panacea for urban and social problems, showing the distinctive role colour plays.

This chapter demonstrates the multiple ways colour repairs space through the widespread Dulux *Let's Colour* project. From providing a social, working opportunity to the disadvantaged in Brazil, to fixing up and renewing a disused Bingo hall in Barking, vitalism in the community colouring discourse describes a range of repairs that take place. Set in the bleak political and economic climate of 'Broken Britain', incentives to 'fix' the nation were set firmly in the hands of the community, with the austere political climate in Britain giving rise to localist community programmes that shift responsibility away from the state. Through analysing the range of different levels

of community and artistic engagement with local initiatives intent on bringing colour to place, this chapter gives a critical reading of the *Let's Colour* project in the UK as an example of a localist programme intent on improving neighbourhood spaces. Far from a designer dress, I argue that colour in the *Let's Colour* programme is presented as a key feature of a resilient armory that claims to help repair the grey, colourless spaces of London.

However, I argue that these projects are fraught, tied up with associations of neocolonial practices, slum tourism and self-advertising. In achieving more resilient, lively cities worldwide, the *Let's Colour* program is in tension with achieving sustainability and corporate social responsibility targets and advertising. The *Let's Colour* programme thrives on the reproduction of a grey imaginary, and in many ways, uses the urban landscape as platform to advertise their brand. Through the examination of this project, this chapter argues that the commodity value of colour has shifted from a marker of 'devaluing' a building, to a sought-after product in local regeneration.

The chapter critically examines a large range of rejected applications to the programme in order to expose how the concept of life-giving colour is imagined through the team accepting and rejecting applications. In this examination, I demonstrate that there is a visible politics to what makes for a successful application, where any mention of domestic, light and pale palettes are likely to be rejected outright. Seen as 'uncolourful', colour in the Dulux imagination is a very particular construction. I argue that this is at odds with the inclusivity promoted by the campaign by limiting their range of colour to those thought to give the greatest sense of 'life'.

Through my direct engagement with a community colouring initiative, the final part of this chapter develops scholarship on the 'work' of repair in the participatory painting described through a range of ethnographic vignettes. Using the greys and blacks left over from Phase I of the scheme, the new exterior walls offer a counter-narrative to Dulux's grey-phobia. The co-production of the Galleon captures how these projects unfold and the difficulties that are faced when trying to enact colourful urban repair.

From chapter 3 to chapter 4, this thesis gradually develops a closer, deeper examination of the discourses, pursuit and mobilisation of repair from the ribbons of green and orange around Barking Central, down to the tiny windows of the Galleon and the spider's webs I was tasked with scraping away. In the next chapter, I investigate

the nexus of colour and repair even more deeply by examining the performance and orchestration of repair through an exploration of the ludic geographies of colour.

Chapter 5

The ludic geographies of colour



Imagine you are in Allianz Park in Hendon, north-west London; a place for exhibitions, meetings and social events. You are at a conference, sipping on a coffee and admiring a view of the park's spectacular vista of rich green fields. From the corner of your eye, you spot a rustle in the bushes. Suddenly, runners dressed in vest tops and shorts stream out of the greenery, screaming as they skip over logs haphazardly arranged as obstacles. A young man falls. Within seconds he is surrounded by growling, flesh hungry 'zombies', thrashing towards him with bright red fake blood dripping from their mouths. The zombies 'gorge' on him like a gluttonous pack of wolves. One zombie snatches a white tag hanging out the back of the runner's shorts, holds it high in triumph before letting him escape. The zombie brushes himself down, puts the tag away, and continues on his pursuit.⁴⁹⁴

Themed five kilometre running events like this have exploded on the global fitness scene over the last decade. From an imagined zombie apocalypse landscape to five kilometre Christmas pudding races, sumo runs and night dashes in the dark, themed events like these use unusual settings and scenarios to lure participants to take part in ludic fitness experiences. The current trend of Colour Runs and the reappropriation of the Holi festival are particularly vivid examples of the way colour intervenes in these ludic spaces. By situating running practices within these unusual, ludic spaces, these emergent running events re-shape how we imagine and perform the traditional race, shifting towards a greater focus on the experience *of* such events.

This chapter considers the ludic geographies of three popular colour based events in London; *The Color Run*, *Run or Dye* and the *Festival of Colours*.⁴⁹⁵ Taking scenes from three ethnographic sites, this chapter explores the consumption of these three urban events. Responding to a wider set of questions and discourses around happiness framed in ludic, affective encounter, this chapter situates *gulal* - the coloured powder used during the ancient Holi festival - as a key in the relational, productive performance of happiness and social capital.

Transforming urban space into a dramatic, enchanted, collective field of experiences, (in)difference and emotions, the ludic geographies of colour examined in this final chapter addresses the way repair is performed through colour. This chapter begins by examining ethnographic fieldnotes taken in the 'Yellow Zone' of *The Color*

⁴⁹⁴ This passage is an imagined example of one of the popular themed races in 2016, *Zombie Evacuation*, where runners negotiate a five kilometre course filled with a range of obstacles, aiming to escape a zombie chase.

Run. Taking the idea of happiness into sharper focus, it examines the wider contemporary debates on happiness, wellbeing, play and social cohesion that frame the complex making of happiness in these events, from the micro-level interactions to the collective, convivial unfolding of emotions. The second part of the chapter examines the practice of colouring the self, visual culture and gender within the context of happiness and wellbeing. Questioning who happiness is for and who these events target, the individualised self-culture of these events in turn raises questions around the body and the self(ie). The chapter then moves towards an autoethnographic exploration of the convivial, collective, transgressive spaces during my own participation in *Run or Dye*. The final part of this chapter moves towards an exploration of the celebration of urban multiculturalism and the carnivalesque, and how ethnically marked traditions have become translated into another (urban) context. Highlighting the key role the traditional Holi festival plays, it examines how colour is not only used to bring people together to play, but how colour is a central part of community and relationship repair. Moving away from colour and the individualised, changing self, this section focuses on the very erasure of difference that is particularly unique in these multicoloured spaces, and how gender, class, age and race are reframed. I conclude with some thoughts on how colour as decoration takes a more nuanced political dimension, unpacking the hidden economies of happiness and the enactment of a collective identity, that these colourful practices enable. Responding to Thrift's call to pay attention to "the restless nature of the body's contact with the world...intertwined and continually coming into sense", this empirical chapter focuses on the *whole* body's presence in space.⁴⁹⁶ Drawing attention to the multi-sensual, dynamic, affective and collective nature of experience, this suggests a new way of thinking of spaces of participation.

This chapter takes on a range of different experiential positions. The first section draws on my own involvement as a 'colour thrower'; a member of *The Color Run* London volunteering team, responsible for administering colour on runners passing through the race's Yellow Zone on the 1st June 2014. Taking this particular position focuses on the 'promotion' of happiness and how emotional labour and performance is a key part of shaping others' experience. In the section that follows, *Colouring and the self(ie)*, I take the role of a runner in London *Run or Dye* race, 27th

⁴⁹⁶ Thrift, N. (2004) Summoning Life. in: Cloke, P., Crang, P., Goodwin, M. (eds.) *Envisioning Human Geographies*. London: Arnold. pp. 81–103

September 2014, in order to experience the happiness that is so specific and central to these events. The final section takes a broader step back, examining the unfolding of the Holi *Festival of Colours* on the 28th June 2014 in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London, as both a participant and a researcher, embedding myself within the festival atmosphere and the rituals of the event. In the next section, I frame contemporary issues around health and wellbeing, discuss the empirical focus of the chapter and the significance of Holi in the ludic production of happiness.

Mobilising gulal

Running as a mass cultural phenomenon developed in the 1970s. Since then, the surge of unusual, themed running events have rapidly altered the fitness landscape. In the UK, the 1978 *Sunday Times* National Fun Run marked a shift in running “without feeling shown up or ridiculed.”⁴⁹⁷ The birth of the ‘fun runner’ built on recreational running’s basic architecture signalled an emerging popularity for organised running events. From performance-focused to playful, from serious to silly, through various short, non-competitive running events, these established events give rise to a wider phenomenon of an ever evolving set of practices. Scholarship on running has been animated by the mobilities turn in the social sciences, particularly the work of John Urry and Mimi Sheller.⁴⁹⁸ Running is a sensuous act about movement; bodies becoming entangled with and drawing an “intimate geography of the city...a convivial and public act, the body exposed to other city dwellers and moments of collective engagement.”⁴⁹⁹ The collective, convivial practices of mass running is steeped in the acts of shared sensation. Involving sweat, exertion and pain, running is also understood as pleasurable. According to Joyce Carol Oates, in her commentary on running, “if there’s any happier activity, more exhilarating, more nourishing on the imagination, I can’t think what it might be.”⁵⁰⁰

A lack of physical activity is one of the key public health problems of the 21st Century, inciting new government guidelines and recommendations to exercise more.

⁴⁹⁷ Perryman, M. (1984) The Running Boom. *Marxism Today*. October, p. 36.

⁴⁹⁸ Sheller, M. & Urry, J (eds) (2006) *Mobile Technologies of the City*. Oxford: Routledge.

⁴⁹⁹ Barnfield, A. (2016) Experiencing post-socialism: Running and urban space in Sofia, Bulgaria. *European Urban and Regional Studies*. 1(3), p. 5.

⁵⁰⁰ Bale, J. (2011) Running: Running as Working. in Merriman, P. and Cresswell, T. (eds) (2011) *Geographies of Mobilities: Practices, Spaces, Subjects*. Ashgate: Surrey, p. 29.

In 2015, London Sport unveiled plans to make London “the most physically active city on the planet”, aiming to get one million people more active by 2020.⁵⁰¹ Framed within attractive economic benefits, the move to get people more active in London responds to wider public health concerns after the number of people playing sport or exercise dropped since the 2012 London Olympics.⁵⁰² Running is viewed as a “driving force” with easy to access city options, like parkrun, making a big impact in the last decade.⁵⁰³ In Colour 5s, health, wellbeing and fitness is not only promoted but to an extent, cunningly camouflaged to provide a non-competitive, cultural and ludic running experience and a platform to increase exercise opportunities. Health promoting practices like these running events reflect the ethics of self-care in public health discourse. New public health under neoliberalism places greater focus on self-governance and endless self-examination, self-care and self-improvement and an encouragement⁵⁰⁴ on individuals to take responsibility for their own self-care.⁵⁰⁵ Neoliberalism’s emphasis on rational and responsible citizenship “seeks to empower free and rational individuals to perform in ways that promote their own, as well as they state’s, health and wellbeing.”⁵⁰⁶ Echoing Foucault’s ‘care of the self’ and turning the medical gaze onto oneself through self-government, the self-care behaviour of colour 5s reflect wider public health discourses around exercise for good health. Five kilometre races, therefore, owing to their relatively short distance, could be understood as achievable fitness goals for first time events runners to play out physical care of the self. Moving away from the locus of the body in self-care, the ethics of happiness cultivates an equally important sense of emotional and mental wellbeing. The ethics of care understood through the contextual, social and emotional care of the self in certain festival practices in the reproduction of social relations; meeting, partying and interacting with others to create a temporary community playscape.

⁵⁰¹ Greater London Authority. (2015) ‘London aims to be the most physically active city on the planet’ Available at: <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/london-aims-to-be-the-most-physically-active-city> [Accessed May 15, 2015]

⁵⁰² BBC News (2016) ‘Sport England figures show drop in sports activity since London 2012’. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-36540017> [Accessed August 4, 2016]

⁵⁰³ Sport England (2017) ‘Stats show upsurge in people doing sport’. Available at: <https://www.sportengland.org/news-and-features/news/2016/june/09/active-people-10/> [Accessed 19 January 2017]

⁵⁰⁴ This encouragement is on occasion better understood as coercion.

⁵⁰⁵ Brown, T. & Watson, D.L.B. (2010) Governing Unhealthy Populations. in Brown, T. McLafferty, S. Moon, G. (2010) *A Companion to Health and Medical Geography*. Blackwell. West Sussex.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid: 484.

Amongst the zombie evacuations, mud runs and night dashes, races and festivals involving the ludic throwing of colour are a particularly popular cultural phenomenon. Taking inspiration from the religious festival *Holi* - most famously characterised by the throwing of colour over one another - the remarkable shift from competitive, performance based running to a commodified experience focused on practices involving throwing coloured powder over one another has become a global sensation. In earlier times, this powder, known traditionally as *gulal*, came from natural sources. After a combination of the chemical revolution in the nineteenth century, the steady decline of urban trees in India, and the attractive monopoly that artificially produced *gulal* powders offered, industrially produced powders took over the commercial landscape of *gulal* production.⁵⁰⁷ Consequently, the synthetic transformation of *gulal* created some health hazards with users, with the industrial dyes causing irritations, allergies and dermatological complications.⁵⁰⁸ Today, the majority of mass produced *gulal* powder is made eco friendly and hypoallergenic to combat the environmental stresses of the aftermath of Hindu festivals⁵⁰⁹ using *gulal* and the physical complaints associated with its use. Thinking through embodiment in urban space, this move to mitigate potential complications is an essential part in the experience of these events; embodied experiences in themselves “exert a powerful force on mood, memory and attitude.”⁵¹⁰ Aside from the threat of a backlash of bad PR that could surface if these factors are overlooked, embodied, mobile urban experience involves a range of sensory textures that are particularly prominent in colour races which make up the race day experience.

Another key reason the manufacturing of *gulal* has moved to a more hypoallergenic, sustainable model is the growth in popularity. The popularity of coloured powder has not only seen Hindu celebrations like Holi culturally translated away from its native context, but re-appropriating the colour throwing performances into other non-religious events. One such example is *The Color Run*. Since the first *Color Run* in 2011 in Phoenix, Arizona, events involving the characteristic playing of

⁵⁰⁷ Chaudhary, H.H, Patel A.K., Patel K.S., Sen D.J. (2014) Colour of ecofriendly dyes used in Holi rather than triphenyl methane dyes. *World Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences*. 3,(9), pp. 1287-1305.

⁵⁰⁸ Lesions are common due to vigorous scrubbing of the skin to stubborn coloured powder (see Ghosh, S. Bandyopadhyay, D. & Verma, S. (2012) Cultural practice and dermatology: the ‘Holi’ dermatoses. *International journal of dermatology*. 51(11), pp. 1385-1387.

⁵⁰⁹ Synthetic powders are known to cause wastewater pollution.

⁵¹⁰ Barnfield, A. (2016) Experiencing post-socialism: Running and urban space in Sofia, Bulgaria. *European Urban and Regional Studies*. 1(3), p. 3.

coloured dye have seen an explosion of interest and variations of Colour 5s,⁵¹¹ notably *Colour Me Rad*, *Run or Dye*, *The Colour Vibe* and *Colour 5k* in the UK. Equally, the more recent emergence of the Holi festival in cities away from the traditional Indian and Nepali roots have gathered momentum. In addition to the *Festival of Colours*, festival goers can attend other Holi events, including *Holi One*, *Shivoo* in Hounslow, which incorporates aspects of Bollywood, or *Land of Colours*. Other Holi events shift away from Bollywood hedonism and focus more on other traditional aspects of Holi, using food as a celebratory centrepiece. *Holi Hungama*, for instance, run by the Rajasthani Foundation charity, offers you a three course meal at Lord's Cricket Ground, *Cinnamon Kitchen* includes dinner; as does *Dishoom*, a group of popular Bombay cafes in London, which promises "tons of gulal" with their family friendly feasts. The extent of these culturally appropriated events signals the growing popularity colour has in communities, and the many iterations that exist demonstrate a clear competitive edge to each kind of colour celebration. In the next part, I detail the three major events that feature in this chapter: *The Color Run*, *Run or Dye* and the *Festival of Colours*.

The Color Run is the largest running event in the world. Owned and operated by for-profit company The Color Run LLC, it was founded by Travis Snyder in 2011, an events organiser and entrepreneur from Utah, USA.⁵¹² *The Color Run* is accompanied by the hashtags, #happiest5k or #myhappy5k and claims to celebrate "healthiness, happiness and individuality."⁵¹³ The five kilometre urban race follows a simple principle; runners begin the day with a white *The Color Run* branded t-shirt. At each kilometre of the race, you enter a Colour Zone; the first kilometre is pink, the second yellow, the third purple and the fourth orange. In these Colour Zones, volunteers line up and throw powdered colour over you, covering as much of you as they can.

Attracting around 20,000 runners per event, participants are let onto the courses in rapid waves of anything between 500-800 runners every 3-6 minutes. *The Color Run* is "full of music, super cool selfies, happy crowds, wicked race packs, great sponsor freebies, and...shed loads of colour." The main webpage jokes that there are white clothes inspectors located throughout the event, and you'll be "arrested and put

⁵¹¹ Owing to the increase in the amount of five kilometre races using colour, the term "Colour 5s" emerged during interviews as a colloquial, umbrella phrase to describe these kinds of events as a whole.

⁵¹² Snyder previously organised rock climbing events and triathlons.

⁵¹³ The Color Run Facebook page. (2017) Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/TheColorRunUk/> [Accessed 9th January 2017]

in jail if more than 11.8% of your person is a colour other than white.”⁵¹⁴ The end of the race is celebrated by the ‘Finish Festival’, where the atmosphere thickens into a more carnivalesque affair with music provided by DJs and MCs.⁵¹⁵ At the Finish Festival, there are ritualistic colour throws in fifteen minute intervals to welcome new runners.

Unlike many other sporting events, *The Color Run* is non-competitive. Participants are encouraged to walk, skip or dance around the 5k course. Since its inception, *The Color Run* has delivered over two hundred annual events and engaged over two million participants across the globe. Launched in the UK in 2013, it describes itself as “the original, largest and most unique 5km in the world, celebrating healthiness, friendship and having the time of your life.”⁵¹⁶ UK locations have included London, Manchester, Brighton, Birmingham and Glasgow. Entering the race as an individual will cost £29.99, but since 2014, the race has encouraged inclusivity further by encouraging participants to bring their children, enabling runners to traverse the course with their buggies⁵¹⁷, and ensuring the race course is wheelchair accessible throughout. Although *The Color Run* still maintains its connection with Dulux, in 2015 it extended its partnership to another major organisation, International Management Group (IMG) Worldwide.⁵¹⁸ *The Color Run*’s partnership with IMG Worldwide enabled an expansion of the race into other global cities⁵¹⁹. Following the trend of other major running events, *The Color Run* announced an official charitable partnership with UK charity the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC). To maintain variety and interest, different iterations of the race have emerged over the years, including a nighttime version *The Color Run Night* (2014) and *Tropicolor* (2016), which boasts holiday-style beach merchandising and an extra Rainbow Zone (see fig 5.1).

⁵¹⁴ The Colour Run. (2017c) FAQ’s. Available at: <http://thecolorrun.co.uk/faq/>. [Accessed January 9, 2017]

⁵¹⁵ Abbreviation of ‘Master of Ceremonies’: the chief person who presides and comperes events, usually introducing performers.

⁵¹⁶ The Colour Run. (2017b) About. Available at: <http://thecolorrun.co.uk/about/>. [Accessed January 10, 2017]

⁵¹⁷ Since 2014, children under 5 can take part in the race with an adult for free.

⁵¹⁸ In 2016, *The Color Run*’s partnerships have expanded further to include The Metro, Capital Radio, Dare 2b, Capri Sun, Alpen Oat Granola, Virgin Active, Renault, and its most prominent sponsor, the multicoloured confectionary brand Skittles, who boast the slogan ‘taste the rainbow’.

⁵¹⁹ This includes Hong Kong, Shanghai, Beijing, Singapore, Seoul, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Dubai, Barcelona, Madrid, Amsterdam, Brussels, Dublin, Toronto, Vancouver, Vietnam, also a new focus on the Middle East with the addition of Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon and Egypt.

One of the other races competing against *The Color Run* is *Run or Dye*, dubbed ‘The World’s Most Colourful 5k.’ Attracting around 3,000 participants per race *Run or Dye* follows a similar structure to *The Color Run* - an untimed five kilometre race, with five colour zones to pass through with their branded *Run or Dye* white t-shirts. The event promises to give runners “the experience of a colour festival.”⁵²⁰ The event is described as a “gateway to exercising for a lot of people.”⁵²¹ Runners are explicitly instructed to run through each colour and to “NOT dodge the colour... more colour more prizes.”⁵²² Like *The Color Run*, at the end of the event runners take part in a post-race festival, or ‘colour storm’. In comparison to *The Color Run*, *Run or Dye* has a stronger focus on crowd participation, music and MCs, reaching a crescendo at the final countdown where runners are encouraged to “tie dye the sky.” During *Run or Dye*, the final festival is formed of three games. In one game, ‘Dye War’, each side of the crowd has a colour. The game becomes a crowd versus crowd dye throw, with the aim to get everyone covered in your sides’ colour. The aim of the second game, ‘Anti Dye Dodge’ is simple; get the most colourful. The last game is the signature contest of the day, ‘Dye Blast’. It involves the chief MC at the festival literally blasting colour at runners with a cannon, and is pre-empted with the tag line, “will you survive the dye blast?” Embedded in these three contests is a clear narrative: the race itself may not be competitive, but becoming the most colourful by the end of the event certainly is.

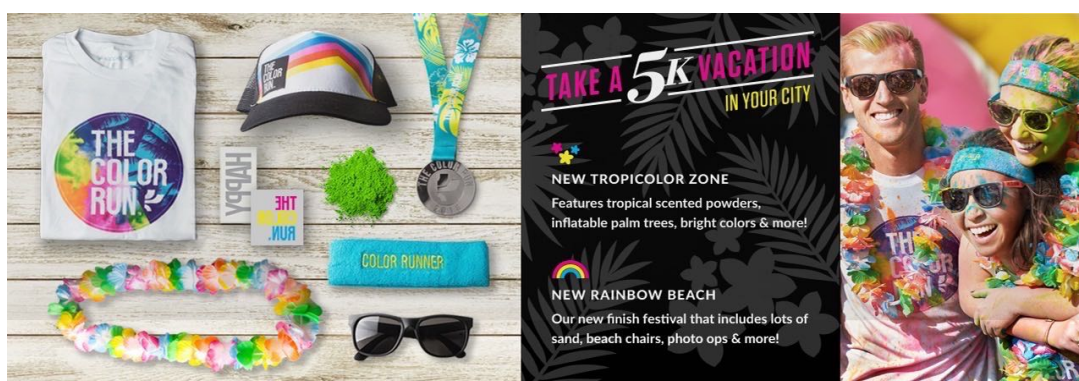


Fig 5.1 A variation of *The Color Run*. Source: The Color Run

⁵²⁰ Run or Dye. (2017) About. Available at: <http://runordye.co.uk/about/about-run-or-dye>. [Accessed February 2, 2017]

⁵²¹ Conversation with Clark Lind, organiser of *Run or Dye* UK, Jun 2014.

⁵²² Run or Dye. (2017) About. Available at: <http://runordye.co.uk/about/about-run-or-dye>. [Accessed February 2, 2017]

Playing Holi

The playful throwing of colour that characterises colour 5s reproduces Holi. Observed in most parts of India and Nepal since 300 B.C.E, Holi, known as the ‘festival of colours’ is widely celebrated by the good hearted spraying of coloured powder, known as *gulal*, over one another. Holi is a Hindu spring festival observed in most parts of India and Nepal, though it is celebrated in many different ways and its origins are obscure. The date - the full moon of Phalgun - falls around the time of the spring harvest, the building of a bonfire (called *Holika Dahan* - the burning of Holika - or *Chhoti Holi* - little Holi) after which prayers are offered. Holi is celebrated at the end of the winter season on the last full moon of the lunar month Phalguna⁵²³ and some relaxation of accepted social-hierarchical norms are the commonest features, while association with a demoness called Holika is very widespread. The festival usually lasts 2-3 days in rural India. The paint-throwing sometimes turns into mud throwing, and the intersex and intercaste antics sometimes become beatings - women on men. Erotic dancing highlights the festival’s association with fertility and spring, and celebrate two key figures in Hindu tradition, Radha and Krishna, engaged in love play. However, beyond the visually stimulating and ludic practice of throwing colour is a much deeper lying set of historical ideas. At the very heart of the Holi festival is its sense of bonhomie; it is a meeting to enable play. Indeed, the practice of throwing colour at Holi is referred to as ‘playing Holi’, turning attention to its ludic sensibilities. The coloured powder represents the ash worn by king Hiranyakashipu’s people to observe Holika’s death. Triumphant good over evil, a key characteristic of Holi is the burning of negativity in the bonfires lit on the eve of *Holi Lathmar*. The materiality of colour and the practice of playing Holi is significantly egalitarian. Holi is an occasion not only to bring communities together to play, but to dissolve social difference and repair relationships. Throwing *gulal* over one another is a levelling practice, transforming everyone involved into an amalgamation of colours; at once completely unique and strikingly different. Covered in *gulal*, everyone at Holi takes on a new camouflage where ethnicity, gender and caste becomes irrelevant. Everyone is coloured in equally messy amounts.

⁵²³ Phalguna usually falls in February or March.



Fig 5.2 Holi One in Wembley Park, London. Photo: Rex Features

Inspiring colour runs over the globe, the Holi festival itself is a popular tourist destination with many people travelling all over the world to experience this unique annual event. Entrepreneurial event organisers have attempted to bring the spirit of Holi to European contexts. Participating in other religious and cultural realities opens up the possibilities of enchantment, providing opportunities to experience the ephemeral, surreal, and transcendent. One such event is the *Holi Festival of Colours*. Organised by the Holi Concept GmbH, the *Festival of Colours* in 2012 was the first Holi Festival in Europe. Founded by three event organisers from Germany⁵²⁴, lead organiser Jasper thought of bringing the Holi concept to a new context after a visit to Delhi, North India in 2011. After a year of preparation and enlisting two friends working in event organisation and marketing to support the event, the Holi Concept GmbH held the first Holi Festival of Colours in Berlin, June 29th 2012. The event spread across Dresden, Hannover and Munich, attracting up to 11,000 guests each. Tickets range from £29.99-£42.99 each, with different tickets offering different quantities of colour and merchandise. Today, the *Festival of Colours* takes place on four different continents and has attracted over half a million festivalgoers.

Since the 1990s, scholarly interest has paralleled the increase in the number of urban festivals internationally. This particular rise can in part be attributed to the proliferation of festivals as a contemporary urban regeneration tool of neoliberal governance through the conjunction of business, play and fantasy. Historically, hosting

⁵²⁴ The three event organisers were Jasper Hellman, Max Riedel and Maxim Derenko.

festivals has been widely prescribed as a “panacea for the contemporary social and economic ills of cities.”⁵²⁵ Religious festivals such as Holi transform everyday places into temporary environments that produce, consume and process culture. Culture, in Sharon Zukin’s words, is an ‘agent for change’ - not a simple reflection of a material civilisation but an active force, informing visions of collective identity. Festivals, as a time of celebration, were originally part of a ritual nature associated with mythological, religious and ethnic traditions.⁵²⁶ The symbolic meaning of the festival is closely related to overt values recognised by the community as essential to its ideology and a world view, social identity, historical continuity and physical survival which is essentially what festival celebrates⁵²⁷. Holi is one of the few festivals today with links to ancient seasonal celebrations with religious origins. Its translation away from its Asian origins is inflected with the same vocabulary as other festival celebrations, including “having fun and making fun, festival style”⁵²⁸ is very much in the vein of colour 5s and other themed races. Some critics consider that large urban festivals produce empty, commodified showpieces: “highly organised, tightly scripted and often deploy large spectacular events, and are motivated by the branding of place, economic gain and desires to attract tourists and shoppers.”⁵²⁹ Focusing on these commercial aspects, *The Color Run, Run or Dye* and *Festival of Colour* re-fashions the cityscape into a carnival, transforms the urban realm into a consumer playground and locates the body and corporeal experiences as commodity. By appropriating elements of another culture in order to reproduce and commodify religious, non-Western celebrations, it could be argued that Holi-inspired festivals commodify *experience*.

The increase in cultural experiences - ‘buying’ recreations or translations of cultural practice, performance, or selling particular experiences - is another contemporary phenomenon. Hardt and Negri argue that we are living in a biopolitical era of production. In this era, “material commodities often recede into the background and instead the immaterial aspects of commodities take centre stage.”⁵³⁰ Beyond the material, the consumption and productive processes of both the Holi experience and

⁵²⁵ Waitt, G. (2008) Urban Festivals: Geographies of Hype, Hopelessness and Hope. *Geography Compass*. 2(2), p. 513.

⁵²⁶ Sadie, S. (1980) *Festival*, New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians. vol.6, p. 505.

⁵²⁷ Falassi, A. (1987) *Festival: definition and morphology*. In. Falassi, A. (Eds). *Time out of Time: Essays on the festival*. Albuquerque. University of New Mexico Press. pp. 1-10.

⁵²⁸ Abrahams, R.D. (1982) The language of festivals: celebrating the economy. In. Turner, V. (Eds). *Celebration: studies in festivity and ritual*. Washington, DC. Smithsonian Institution Press, pp. 162-163.

⁵²⁹ Edensor, T. (2014) The Potentialities of Light Festivals. *Insights E-Journal*. 7(3), p. 3.

⁵³⁰ Murtola, A. (2014) Experience, Commodification, Biopolitics. *Critical Sociology*. Vol 40. 6. pp. 835-854.

the colour throwing practices involved in Colour 5s involve the production of “subjectivities, social relations and forms of life.”⁵³¹ The commodification of experience draws life into the contemporary operation of capital and is a key feature in the examination of the production and consumption of chromatic, ludic practices.

Situating these practices within a wider culture of events highlights a range of geographical questions around the powerful globalising and neoliberalising tendencies mobilised by the allure of *gula*. The body is a key site in unpacking complex neoliberal ideologies: “Always radically and historically specific, bodies have different kind of specificity...so that they invite a different kind of engagement and intervention”⁵³². As a theory of political economic practice that “proposes human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills” neoliberalism, intimately tied to the “government of the individual” figures “individuals as rational, calculating creatures whose moral autonomy is measured by their capacity for self-care - the ability to provide for their own needs and service their own ambitions. In making the individual fully responsible for her or himself, neoliberalism equates more rational action. These neoliberal processes are useful in the examination of how bodies are used to produce and embody knowledge, and how they might take on particular meanings or convey ideas and values around the production of a particular kind of body, through selective wider health and well-being discourses. In response to the wider societal, political and institutional emphasis on wellbeing today’s appetite to achieve personal happiness and wellbeing is mirrored by an increase in the design of wellbeing-promoting practices, fitness movements and cultural experiences like *The Color Run*, *Run or Dye* and *The Festival of Colours*.

The sections that follow are ethnographic accounts of the production and consumption of the multicultural, affective and ludic flecks of coloured powder that brings thousands of people together each year during *The Color Run*, *Run or Dye* and *Festival of Colours*. Moving across a range of position takings and layers of experience, this chapter will explore the re-imagination of space through the emotional, cultural and community dimensions within the colour race and festival. Reflecting on the wider processes of neoliberalism, health, happiness and multicultural, this final empirical

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² Haraway, D.J. (1991) *The Biopolitics of postmodern bodies: Constitutions of Self Immune System Discourse* In. Haraway, D.J. *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. London: Free Association books, p. 208

chapter deals with not only with using colour to orchestrate emotional performance, but the ways in which colour responds to this thesis on repair.

The production of happiness

Eric takes a powder popper bottle from the back of his jeans.⁵³³ With a quick flick of his wrist, we watch thousands of yellow particles of coloured corn starch soar out of the transparent nozzle of the bottle, hovering in the air for a brief moment before crumbling down and settling onto his sturdy, heavy duty shoes. The powder is light, beautiful and enchanted; sprinkling out into a cloud, dancing in the air before slowly dissolving away. He shows us another manoeuvre, swinging his arm back and jolting it forward, firing out a fierce jet of yellow.

Eric: This is the fun group, okay? This is the fun zone. We want you to have as much fun as possible, because it will transfer onto them. Look like you're having fun. If you look happy, they'll all be happy.⁵³⁴

In a few hours time, a cavalcade of 17,500 runners will be covered head to toe in yellow, blue, purple and orange powder, staining shirts and shoes, smudged across faces and teeth and sticking onto hair. Coursing through a five kilometre route around Wembley, West London and finishing close to the national football stadium, the runners pass through various giant blow up rings branded with the event's slogan, The Happiest 5k on the Planet.

Situated at the second colour throw area, the Yellow Zone, I stand and take notes as the race begins to take shape around us. Eric is in charge of our zone. He is a thirty-something events organiser decorated with an impressive headset, a walkie-talkie and two mobile phones in his back pocket. His job is to keep a handle on around forty volunteers responsible for throwing colour on runners approaching the second kilometre of the five kilometre race, giving important warnings, instructions and techniques in order for us to perform our jobs correctly. His arms wave up and down theatrically, pointing around as he separates the group into smaller clusters of around ten, taking each subgroup one by one to give a quick briefing. The runners are due to pass through in

⁵³³ A powder popper is the technical name given to the bottles used to propel coloured powder at people during races such as *The Color Run*.

⁵³⁴ Fieldnote diary entry: Watching Eric. 1st June 2014.

about thirty minutes and the stage is still being set. Around us, support staff are loading and unloading various mysterious boxes and barrels from vans, rear doors slamming before they toot at people to get out the way so they can get to the next zone. Eric takes a group to one side; eight women, three men, divided into four friendship groups that I expect have come together to the event. We are standing along Hannah Close, on the west side of Wembley Stadium, London, a grey stretch of road between two gravel sorting areas. The walls around the industrial quarter here are veiled with a thick, blue tarpaulin sheet. I watch as some subgroup member's strain to hear Eric talk as an enormous construction truck loader peers over the top of other side of the wall, swivels, and tips out gravel onto a huge mound just out of sight. As it beeps and reverses away, the group re-focuses and nod assertively at his instructions. Eric puts his hands together in thanks before speed walking to our group. I listen intently and jot down his advice:

1. Work in small groups

2. Be 'inventive'

3. Do not under any circumstances let anyone run through without any colour on them.

Make sure you get them, all of them he says stony faced, in complete seriousness, before briskly walking away to the next group.⁵³⁵

Whilst fitness events today respond to a wider public health agenda on exercise and wellbeing, *The Color Run* imbricates health and wellbeing with a particular emphasis on singling out and heightening 'happiness'. As far back as two centuries ago, economic philosophers Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill introduced the 'greatest happiness principle' as opposed to just measuring economic wealth alone in the assessment of a country's development.⁵³⁶ The growing interdisciplinary field of hedonic studies, the academic study of happiness, is for the most part responsible for the 'happiness turn' in science and popular culture in the mid-2000. In 2005, British economist Lord Richard Layard's popular writings on happiness call for governments to measure wellbeing alongside GDP. Soon after, David Cameron, British politician and then Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, called for the measurement of Gross

⁵³⁵ Fieldnote diary entry: First instructions with Eric. 1st June 2014.

⁵³⁶ McLellan, R. Galton, M. Steward, S & Page, C. (2012) The impact of creative initiatives on wellbeing: a literature review. Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE) Literature Reviews, Newcastle Upon Tyne: Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE).

National Happiness in 2006 as part of a £2million plan to gauge ‘general wellbeing’.⁵³⁷ The arrival of happiness on the political stage officially came in 2010, when the United Kingdom became one of the first countries to officially monitor happiness. A new Quality of Life working group places happiness indices alongside GDP as key performance indicators, including examining the quality of areas such as civic engagement, health status and social connections.

The Color Run is a social, orchestrated cultural performance. Eric’s instructions point towards our role in the generation of ludicity in the environment, “the fun zone” as he describes it, highlighting the importance of the embodied work needed to produce a vividly coloured, fun, playful space. The presentational work that Eric describes is similar to Phil Crang’s exploration on the different displays enacted by a waiter in a restaurant or Erving Goffman’s work on the presentation of the self.⁵³⁸ Thinking through the language of performance in Eric’s initial instructions, it is apparent that there is a complex tension between work and play. By playing, we are working. This conflicts with non-instrumental interpretations of play in Western metaphysics, which understood play as in opposition to productive work.⁵³⁹ By ‘looking’ like we are working, we are encouraged to enact and perform a service. The performative fusion of work and play in *The Color Run* is key in the cultural production of the race as ‘The Happiest 5k on the Planet’. Play is often framed as a process of cultural and social learning, operating as a utilitarian function. The playful theatricality of Eric’s demonstration to us transcends and reshapes the rules of social engagement in urban encounters, encouraging playful interactions displayed during Holi, where strangers are allowed to act publicly in a playfully expressive, colour-throwing manner. Performing this cultural work is a key part of the emotional labour that enables the production and consumption of happiness in the event. This site-specific, dramaturgical invocation of social interaction works to create the correct atmosphere that is key to the production of emotion. Instructing the volunteers to

⁵³⁷ Originating in Bhutan, Gross National Happiness has been measured since the early 1970s. In the West, the move to measure happiness was proposed after the Beyond GDP conference in 2007. Nicolas Sarkozy hired the esteemed, Nobel-prize winning economists Joseph Stiglitz and Amartya Sen to lead a Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress, after the French President requested them to come up with measures to use joy and wellbeing key indicators of growth, rather than GDP, in France.

⁵³⁸ Crang, P. (1994) Its Showtime: On the workplace geographies of display in Southeast England. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. 12, pp. 675-704.

Goffman, E. (1990) *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*. London: Penguin.

⁵³⁹ Etymologically, play has been defined in opposition to work since 1377. See Woodyer, T. (2012) Ludic geographies: not merely child’s play. *Geography Compass*. 6(6) pp. 313-326.

‘look like’ they are having fun, to ‘look’ happy and be playful, is a key part of the presentational work that is required to exaggerate, enhance and co-produce the ludic atmosphere Eric is trying to orchestrate.



Fig 5.3 Preparing for the runners. Source: Cianna Wyshnytzky.

Eric uses an affective vocabulary to describe the movement of emotions from one to another, thinking through the mobile energies and intensity of affect. The multidirectional flow of emotional, sensory and informational events that affect bodies is difficult to manage, but as Eric suggests, attempts are made to try and make it flow in a certain direction. The relative movements and interactions that Eric describes aids in the production of ‘feeling states’, or felt sensations, manifesting on a somatic register that impacts on an individual’s capacity for engagement, involvement and their ability to affect others.⁵⁴⁰ He clearly asserts that fun will ‘transfer onto them’; looking happy will make them ‘all’ happy. This vocabulary brings attention to the relational capabilities and capacity to (inter)act with other entities; human (bodies) and non-human (colour), which is crucial in the production of the affective environment in which happiness takes place. Furthermore, this suggests fun and happiness is

⁵⁴⁰ Massumi, B. (2000) *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Duke University Press. Durham, N.C; McCormack, D. (2008) Geographies for moving bodies: thinking, dancing, spaces. *Geography Compass* 2 (6). pp. 1822-1836; Thrift, N. (2004) Intensities of feeling: towards a spatial politics of affect. *Geografiska Annaler B* 86. pp. 57-78.

contagious, “leaping” from one body to another.⁵⁴¹ This affective mobility is well described in Sara Ahmed’s *The Promise of Happiness*.⁵⁴² Here, Ahmed conceptualises affect as ‘sticky’; connecting a range of values and ideas between bodies and objects. To be affected by happiness requires particular things to be in place - what Ahmed describes as ‘happiness objects’ - to allow us to be positively affected. Less of a simple emotional or affective response, happiness is better considered as a learned mode of bodily orientation towards specific objects that have already acquired positive value. This learned orientation is reinforced and reiterated through ideas around colour and childhood play, colour and emotion and the commodified visibility and cultural appropriation of colour as a key agent in the making of the festival feel. The promise of happiness - if you do this, then happiness will follow - is what makes things seem ‘promising’, which means the promise of happiness is not in the thing itself. Latin for promise - *promissum* (send forth, before) and *mittere* ‘to put, send’, the promise of happiness is what *sends happiness forth*. On a social level, colour embodies feelings that are passed around through play, embodied labour and the movement of colour onto the skin and in the urban realm.

The Color Run also reinforces the vital relationality between colour and happiness through the clear instructions we are given by expressing ideas of happiness through our performed corporeality. Our job as throwers is to present this expectation onto consumers - the runners - in order for these essentialist tropes around colour and happiness to be further strengthened. Furthermore, affect is not only attached to people, relations, sensations and ideas, but “co-produced in cultural discourses of emotion as well as psycho-social narratives.”⁵⁴³ These processes work together to continue to reinforce these learned, positive orientations towards colour as a playful, convivial material with an affective potential to “liven” or “cheer up” an area, something I captured when overhearing a conversation between two volunteers:

Volunteer 1: What a drab location to have a race...

Volunteer 2: Ha...This is the most *scenic* run I’ve ever seen. Could do with a bit of colour to liven it up!⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴¹ Anna Gibbs using the terminology ‘leaping’ to describe the movement of affect between bodies. See Gibbs, A. (2001) Contagious Feelings: Pauline Hanson and the epidemiology of affect. *Australian Humanities Review*. Vol 25. Retrieved from: <http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-December-2001/gibbs.html>

⁵⁴² Ahmed, S. (2010) *The Promise of Happiness*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

⁵⁴³ Thein, D. (2005) Affect or beyond feeling? A consideration of affect and emotion in geography. *Area* 37 (4) p. 453.

⁵⁴⁴ Fieldnote diary entry: Overheard conversation, The Yellow Zone of The Color Run, 1st June 2014.

Even before we were given Eric's particular instructions, *The Color Run* website hints at the promise of happiness that comes with participation in the event:

Q: How is the colour administered?

A: *You will see smiling faces along the race the whose main goal to douse you in colourful powder to ensure you look like you ran through a beautiful rainbow by the time you cross the line.*⁵⁴⁵

Our first task is to create a runway for the participants to race across which protects the road. While volunteers sandbag down the yellow zone signs, the noise of a grey van transporting extra equipment blasts out British record producer and DJ Calvin Harris' popular dance tune "When I Met You in the Summer" from its windows. Speakers propped up onto support stands start to bellow out the song, too. The pounding music and bright yellow t-shirts of the volunteer disrupts and defamiliarises the industrial tone, clashing with the factories around us as a festival atmosphere begins to develop. Two volunteers unroll a thick black cover along the ground which we tape down. The sheet is heavy and long, and few people seem interested in helping. Everyone is distracted by the blue kegs that are planted along the side of the lane being marked out. One volunteer peers over one of the kegs and plucks out an empty plastic powder popper bottle, fiddling with the nozzle affixed to the end. Suddenly, as more people begin gravitate toward the blue kegs, bright yellow powder starts spilling out onto the street, dissolving in the air and settling onto skin. Playtime begins. Groups immediately start shaking the bottles and covering themselves in the yellow, rubbing it across their hair like shampoo, applying it across their cheeks like blusher or in two stripes with their fingers like warpaint. Colour was applied like sun lotion, rubbing it all over their skin. Some created a yellow cocktail, pouring powder into their water bottles and being dared to down it.⁵⁴⁶ The group formed a 'guard of honour' to allow a man on a moped, appearing confused at the construction of the event, through their territory (see fig 5.4).

⁵⁴⁵ The Colour Run. FAQ's. (2017c) Available at: <http://thecolorrun.co.uk/faq/>. [Accessed January 9, 2017]

⁵⁴⁶ We were repeatedly told the colour is safe. *The Color Run* website claims that the coloured powder used at the event is "made from food grade cornstarch, is 100% natural and causes no harm to the skin or the environment." The practice of 'drinking' the colour was only accepted by two male volunteers, perhaps best described as the more 'radical' group members. Part of the insistence that the colour is safe may be due to a high profile serious incident during a *Color Run* race in Taipei Taiwan in June 2015, where a serious dust explosion of colour powder injured over 500 people and caused 15 deaths, bringing significant health and safety concerns of the materiality of the coloured powder.

The level of noise begins to increase and the sound of excitement drowns out the scattering of gravel and shovelling tractors. Around me, people practice their throwing techniques, finding the best angle to fire the colour out the bottle; double handed over the tops of heads covers someone like icing a cake, deft flicks of the wrist sprays the colour straight into crinkled faces or chests, or full 360 spins, which cover you in a raincloud of yellow.⁵⁴⁷

The event presents itself as a cosmetic cultural intervention. Colour's application during these early stages of the race is used by the volunteers much like make-up; resembling blusher, powder, or the re-colouring of hair. This presents itself as an individualised and convivial practice; sharing colour between bodies and decorating each other is an essential part of the socio and material practices of their role. The behaviour of the volunteers here demonstrates their attempt to 'go native', or to get into the role that they have signed up to perform. Going naive and embracing the playful 'making up' is part of the cultural performance and labour of the volunteers, working as a kind of uniform of dressing of the body for their role. The relatedness of the latin *colorem* to *celare*, to hide or conceal demonstrates this cosmetic, costume-like appropriation of colour to the body. Much like the 'designer dresses' Mark Wigley discussed when thinking through colour and architecture, bodies in *The Color Run* are a performance, and they are ensuring their costumes fit for the stage that is being set.⁵⁴⁸ Even before the race, I note that most of the volunteers sport suspiciously new white shoes so that they can christen them with unique colours and create an entirely new version. The appropriation of colour to the body, part performance and part costuming for the cultural work they are signed up to do, is a key part of the complex making of the event.

Eric presses an earpiece firmly into his ear as he listens to instructions on his intercom. The first wave of runners have been released. He gathers us together to prepare us for what is to come:

Eric: The runners will be going wild. They will eat it, roll in it, run off with it [pauses] they are crazy. I don't want the runners to come through and not have any yellow.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁷ Fieldnote diary entry: Participant observation of volunteers playing with coloured powder. The Color Run, 1st June 2014.

⁵⁴⁸ Wigley, M. (1995) *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The fashioning of modern architecture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press.

⁵⁴⁹ Fieldnote diary entry: Eric's instructions. 1st June 2014.



Fig 5.4 Volunteers ‘Guard of Honour’ (2014). Source: Cianna Wyshnytzky.

Eric’s addressing of the runners as “wild” and ‘crazy” reinvigorates historical associations of colour and the savage, interpreting colour as “a fast falling decline into that savage state of non-civilisation that history and Western European culture has worked so diligently to lift itself up and out of.”⁵⁵⁰ Contact with material colour is expected to have a transformative affection on the runners, engendering them as animalistic and uncontrollable. Part of me is quite fearful of this transformation. Still, I am reminded that our role - our service - is to effectively produce a landscape where these desires can unfold. Eric’s warning to us about their behaviour is then perhaps a veiled instruction. Pandering to the runners, encouraging them to behave in the animalistic manners Eric describes, is all part of the complex making of the event.

The steady hum of the generator keeping the giant yellow blow up ‘The Happiest 5k on the Planet’ ring is drowned out by the stampede of feet fast approaching. A heavy bassline of summer tunes is clouded by the sound of cheers, whooping and laughter. The volunteers arrange themselves neatly into

⁵⁵⁰ Crary, J. (1990) *Suspensions of Perceptions: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*. Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press.

two rows, filled bottles in hand, standing tall prepared for work. The first wave of runners emerge, donned in serious running gear; short shorts, running socks and running shoes. They take long, leggy strides and pace through the zone quickly and powerfully. They hold their arms up high in surrender, closing their eyes and mouths tightly as they pass through us. Once the serious runners have passed through, the Yellow Zone become empty, and lapsed into inertia.⁵⁵¹

The decorating of one another and one self during *The Color Run* is not only central to the creation of sensual and emotional currents that course through bodies, but breaks down assumptions that the world that *The Color Run* creates is purely visual. The haptic, tactile decorating of one self and others contributes to the events' conviviality by inviting interactions between people and connecting through touch to create a visual aesthetic that can mobilise shared embodied emotional experiences. These interactions were best demonstrated during the periods of inertia waiting for runners to pass the zone, where I spotted volunteers who were less coloured being exposed to the others, including me:

Volunteer 3: You guys are too clean! *A young volunteer, in his early 20s, tells me with a beaming smile. He shakes up his bottle and squeezes the powder out across our legs.*

Volunteer 3: That's better. *He smiles, skipping away. Shortly after, a car sneaks past the barriers barricading the road. A chorus of "get them!" erupts as another gang of puckish boys chase after the car, covering its rear window.*⁵⁵²

There is a distinct temporality at play. *The Color Run* produces a temporary landscape of play, a temporary community that engages with it and a temporality to the atmosphere that we are trying to create. Between the excited, playful scenes marked by the arrival of runners are periods of inertia and lull. The atmosphere ebbs and flows, forms and reforms according to the temporal contingencies unfolding in the Yellow Zone. As such, there were distinct phases as play and the enactment of happiness in the co-creation of the ludic atmosphere; clear patterns and rhythms where you could feel the atmosphere unfurling and thickening. Noise, laughter, cheering and colour peaked as the runners passed and died down, settled and quietened as the runners left. When the atmosphere dropped, I noted occasions where volunteers chased each

⁵⁵¹ Fieldnote diary entry: Noting temporalities. 1st June 2014.

⁵⁵² Fieldnote diary entry: Playing. 1st June 2014.

other, protecting their bottles carefully from being snatched away by someone else. In administering and producing happiness, they perform particular tactics and actively look for white amongst the splodgy mass of purples and yellows. These practices were reactive and provocative, inviting engagement with others. Sensing these periods of lull, the volunteers' attention was drawn to the spaces of non-colour, perceiving the Yellow Zone as a territory they need to mark. In particular, the volunteers seemed reluctant to waste the contents of their bottles of colour on the 'serious' runners, concerned that they will run out too early. As I observe their behaviour and add it into my fieldwork diary, another yellow volunteer approaches me:

Would you be willing to paint on me? *He asks. I oblige, spraying yellow on his chest as if we are in a yellow tribe.*
Wait, where's your war paint?⁵⁵³



Fig 5.5 Volunteers playing in the Yellow Zone (2014). Source: Cianna Wyshnytzky

Warfare is a useful lens to examine the ludic geographies of colour. In *The Color Run*, happiness is not only mobilised and enacted through the imaginative sphere of

⁵⁵³ Fieldnote diary entry: Participant observation. 1st June 2014.

play and the cultural labour of the volunteers, but objectifies the powder poppers as ‘war toys’; objects in embodied playful practices. In fact, Johan Huizinga’s seminal work in 1938 on play, *Homo Ludens*, was inspired by the chivalric culture of tournaments and jousting. Today, recent work in critical geopolitics examines questions around the ludic geopolitics of toys, militarism and play.⁵⁵⁴ Toy theorists like Sutton-Smith insist that toys themselves do not dictate play, arguing that “the plans of the playful imagination dominate...the toys, not the other way around.”⁵⁵⁵ However, I argue that the liminality of the powder popper as a weapon is more than an imaginative and refashioned toy object. Engaging participants in play through these objects, using the fluid, polymorphous process of play is a more productive practice than fashioning a bottle as a war toy. As I observe the volunteers during their performative behaviours, play fighting is a *peaceful* exercise; engaging with strangers irrespective of gender, religion or ethnicity, and thus bringing people together. The concept of a war and battle entwined within play and festival space is of course evoked through Holi. It is also apparent in the ‘battles’ at the end of *Run or Dye*, including “Dye War” and “Anti Dye Dodge.” These practices bring peace by inviting others to *play through war* in a peaceful, non-violent method to bring participants together.

The atmosphere intensifies and within just a few minutes the yellow space transforms and thickens again. The volunteers gather together and plan their attacks, queuing up opposite and alongside one another, quickly recharging their bottles with more powder. Thousands of runners start to emerge through the blow up rings as the cloud of yellow begins to take shape around us. The runners slow down as they enter our territory, twirling, rolling across the floor, somersaulting and sliding, screaming and yelling with delight. I watch as layers of colour in the air slowly settles on the runner’s hair, skin and clothes. The runners rub colour into themselves like moisturiser, spitting any they have managed to get in their mouth out like venom. As the coloured powder comes in contact with the skin, I observe many of them shrieking in delight. Many of them made demands like “Give me colour!” “Come on then, colour me!” and “Yellow me!.” Not far from me, a runner slowed down, jogging on the spot in front of one of the other throwers; “can I be cheeky and grab some of the that?” producing a small sandwich bag from his pocket and looking on expectantly at us.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵⁴ Huizinga, J. (1938) *Homo Ludens*. London. Routledge and Kegan Paul, p. 41.

⁵⁵⁵ Sutton-Smith, B. (1986) *Toys as Culture*. New York: Gardener Press. p. 204.

⁵⁵⁶ Fieldnote diary entry: The second stampede. 1st June 2014.



Fig 5.6 Volunteers attacking runners. (2014). Source: Cianna Wyshnytzky.

The vignette above not only describes the flow or motion of affect from runners-to-others, from volunteer-to-runner, and volunteer-to-volunteer, but the embodied labour mobilised by the runners, as well as the volunteers. The runners are a central part in the production of happiness through their encounter with it, and as such, are a key part of the complex network of happiness production by allowing it to be as *visible* as possible. The way the runners make the material *visible* through their adornment of the powder is productive in three ways. It illustrates how happiness is shared, produced and reproduced in space through the complex interactions with the runners and their environment, the expectations as they enter the Yellow Zone, and their specific relationship with colour. Articulating their embodied knowledge around colour and emotion through their practices within the Yellow Zone, the runners' reactions, encounters and interpretations make visible the material-visual commodity field that circumvents *The Color Run*. For example, the demands that the runners made, "yellow me", as one example, articulates the embodied nature of knowledge around colour's affective possibilities, valuing the experiential and emotional in the constructed, contextual 'taking place' of happiness the Yellow Zone. Secondly, drawing

attention to this ‘taking place’ evokes the sensory affordances of colour and the variety of reactions (such as shrieking with delight, spitting out etc.) and ecologies of seeing, feeling and perceiving colour-as-happy. Thirdly, the moment where the runner asked for colour to keep and take home works against the historical associations of colour’s devaluing effects; colour here embodies an experiential, sentimental value. The collective, embodied experience of the Yellow Zone illustrates how emotion can transcend both the human bodies within the colour zone and the bodies of knowledge and discourse around colour and the unfolding intercorporeal relationships and encounters.

Negotiating my position within the social network, I shared both the delights of being involved in the colourful, loud playscape of the Yellow Zone, but also the stresses of the cultural work that I had to do:

I am so intrigued by the performance and behaviour of those around me that I almost forget that I, too, have a role in the sequence of events that produces happiness. I take my powder popper, put my finger over the nozzle and shake it up like I am about to spray whipped cream. Everyone passing through looks the same; a splodgy, purple mess, unrecognisable eyebrows, lashes or hair. I approach my first target. As soon as we make eye contact, he cowers low and starts to laugh. All the techniques and tricks I have been taught go a little awry. I opt for a shampooing manoeuvre, tipping a load of colour onto his head and brushing it in. The next runner approaches behind, who has yet to notice me. I perform a low throw to her midriff, her shirt was still relatively white and clean; as a colour thrower, she was not coloured ‘enough’. I targeted her, remembering Eric’s instructions: “I don’t want the runners to come through and not have any yellow.”⁵⁵⁷

Yet, in performing the administering of happiness there is a distinct temporality that finds me conflicted between the modes of happiness and play and the material intensification of the environment. Between the screams of delight, the festival atmosphere, the thick, heady cloud of *gula*, the big yellow blow-up arch, the smiles, I am struggling:

Ebbing and flowing throughout, eventually the atmosphere began to stagnate again. This is a laborious job. Leaning over the powder kegs to fill up bottles, rushing out and throwing colour, our bottles emptied in seconds and it’s not long until they need re-filling again, throwing again, re-filling again, throwing and

⁵⁵⁷ Fieldnote diary entry: Performing happiness. 1st June 2014.

filling. Looking around, the volunteers were downcast and exhausted. When the race mascots sensed a dip in the mood of the event, for instance, when the volunteers stop throwing as excitably as before, the Yellow Zone mascot - a lady dressed extravagantly in a big, glamorous dress, began to chant: "I can see red, I can see blue, I wanna see some yellow on you!" The repeated rhythmic phrase gained momentum as the volume and movement of colour increased again. In contrast to the vitality performed by the runners, the enthusiasm from within the volunteer group began to wane after a few hours of colour throwing. I could not breathe properly due to the colour in my throat; my lips were sore from licking off powder; my hair was flat, dirty and lank and felt like straw; my nose dripped in a constant stream. Blowing my produced bright yellow mucus and some traces of blood. The air was thick and heady, irritable and dry. After the fifth hour, I took a walk away from the Yellow Zone to get some fresh air. Although the colour was harmless, the sulphurous cloud that encased the whole area looked toxic. Looking on at the straggling runners, I could see them limping and groaning at the prospect of entering what they expected to be an over excitable, energised zone, but what they were about to enter was a giant cloud of irritation. The cheers from within the zone become quieter. By this point, I have definitely given up altogether. I step away from the yellow zone. A volunteer tries to get me back involved, encouraging and still brimming with energy. "Come on, fill up your bottle!" he said, extending his hand out to me, and pulling me back into the cloud.⁵⁵⁸

This tension between "looking happy" and the exhaustion and difficulties breathing during work problematises the technologies of happiness. Conceptualising *The Color Run* as an orchestrated, temporary playscape with tactics to produce healthy, happy bodies, over time, the toxicity of the Yellow Zone disputes this imaginary. Situating the pro-happiness and health discourses around *The Color Run* within the toxic yellow cloud at the end of the race is troublesome, questioning and conflicting the nature of collective happiness within *The Color Run*. Infusing a ludic space with an atmospheric toxicity challenges the ubiquitous happiness and healthy bodies that the event seeks to promote and make visible.

The happy, healthy bodies that *The Colour Run* seeks to promote is primarily framed through the use of visual technologies and social media. Runners strapped GoPro cameras to their chests to capture their experience on video. Groups of runners would pause to take photos of each other in the Yellow Zone, increasing in frequency as the race drew to a close. These practices are often cleverly staged in order to reproduce and capture a specifically ludic moment:

⁵⁵⁸ Fieldnote diary entry: Experiencing exhaustion. 1st June 2014.

Three volunteers lay down in star shapes on the concrete floor. “Close your eyes!” one says. A small group starts to appear, holding mobile phones to record the moment on their phones. They all raise their arms and legs rapidly alongside their bodies to imitate a snow angel as one volunteer pours powder all over their bodies, sweeping it across the concrete floor. They leave silhouettes the shape of vertical bow ties behind as they get up. The volunteers use this opportunity to take selfies either individually or in a group. Some add a top up of colour to their face. One volunteer places his phone carefully back in a plastic sandwich bag before putting it safely in his pocket.⁵⁵⁹

The performances that enable these practices to be made visible outside the Yellow Zone raise particular questions around the visualised materialities of *The Color Run*. In taking photos of one another, what exactly is made visible and in what ways do participant use these images? What bodies are being produced and visualised and what subsequent knowledges are they creating? During my observation of *The Color Run* I have engaged with a framework that privileges the affective, interpersonal exchanges between bodies as enabling happiness to ‘take place’ within the ludic spaces of the event. Framed by the histories, expectations and materialities of colour, this analysis suggests that it is a combination of the embodied labour presented by the volunteers, the interactions that take place and the circulation of particular colour knowledge that enables happiness to take place. However, it is still unclear how it feels to experience such orchestrated happiness. The next section moves from an administer of colour to an experiencer of it as I explore the formations, production and consumption of emotion as a runner in another popular colour 5, *Run or Dye*.

Colour and the self(ie)

H: Have either of you done the race yourselves?

C: I have –

N: I haven’t. But from I’ve seen all of the videos it just looks very exciting and I can’t wait to go do it.⁵⁶⁰

Clark and Nicola work for *Run or Dye*. Clark is one of the main event organisers for the London event and Nicola is primarily in charge of marketing and promotion. Owing to the current ubiquity of mobile phones and other digital recording

⁵⁵⁹ Fieldnote diary entry: Snow angels playing. 1st June 2014.

⁵⁶⁰ Conversation with Clark and Nicola, event and marketing organisers for *Run or Dye*, June 2014.

technologies like GoPros, the visual and cultural re-imagination of urban space enabled by *Run or Dye* 5k gains a significant amount of traction thanks to social media technologies. Pervasive modes of engagement enabled by social media, “architected by design to readily support participation, collaboration and community”⁵⁶¹, combined with the tempting visual allure to colour 5s, is a key facet in the success of the event:

Without social media, these events wouldn’t be as popular or as fast as they are. Someone posts a picture and they see their friend all coloured, they look good, they’re exercising, everyone wants to do it and they go viral. We just got here three or four months ago and we’ve already got thousands registered.⁵⁶²

The way being mobile is made, represented and imagined in colourful cultural practices like *The Color Run* or *Run or Dye* differs for the different purposes they serve. During a conversation, Clark candidly explained to me that although he was mainly attracted to the ethics of happiness bound up with the *Run or Dye* brand, he also attributed his preference not to run the race itself as he did not match the demographic:

I like what we stand for and I love what we do, but I’m not a runner and I’m not into the colour thing, so I ran it and I thought it was really interesting because people were having the best time of their lives, and it made them so happy and smiling and I like that about it, I like working for a company that’s about that, but it doesn’t do much for me. I really don’t get it. I’m not the demographic though, at all. I would never pay to go to one of our own events [laughs] I see what it does for people, and we see all the time people posting on Facebook saying its their first 5k and it’s been a goal for them for 5 month leading up to it [...] I think it’s a good thing [...] Our demographic is women, aged around 25-35. About 70% of our runners fall in that category. Why? I’m not too sure. Perhaps it’s an interest in women’s fitness or selfie culture.⁵⁶³

Self-images of exhilarated, smiling faces covered in *gula* engenders a kind of promotional language in the visual realm. A selfie - a self portrait made from a camera or phone from arms length or in a mirror - was selected as word of the year by the Oxford English Dictionary in 2013. Posting selfies is often dismissed as self-absorbed, but the relationship between subjectivity, practice and the social use of these images is

⁵⁶¹ Meraz, S. (2009) Is There an Elite Hold? Traditional Media to Social Media Agenda Setting Influence in Blog Networks. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. 14, p. 682.

⁵⁶² Conversation with Clark, event organiser of the UK London Run or Dye, June 2014.

⁵⁶³ Conversation with Clark, June 2014.

presents us with valuable information on how bodies are experienced and performed within visual cultures. Selfies actualise a spatial and temporal moment showing bodies as changing or changeable.⁵⁶⁴ Echoing Goffman, the self-presentation mobilised by selfie practices exhibits a self that closely expresses aspects of their identity that is most salient; here, a ludic self engaging in fitness practices and visual attuned to the histories of Holi. Visual cultures such as photography and video are part of the complex negotiation that takes place which produces an altered version of the self which embraces and appropriates the culture of Holi.

The cultural fascination with social media forms of self-portraiture is divided between being an expression of narcissism or a politically oppositional reclaiming of the female body. In fact, most talk of selfies has often focused on young women. The selfie for young women is often characterised as a “radical act of political empowerment: as a means to resist the male-dominated media culture’s obsession with and oppressive hold over their lives and bodies.”⁵⁶⁵ The practices of taking and sharing selfies of coloured selves helps us to understand the complex relationship between (wo)men, their bodies and their self(ies). Promoting body positive inclusivity and erasing difference through colour and the ludic geographies of the event keeps to the spirit of practicing Holi. Hashtags - a word or phrase preceded with a hash (#) sign - are often used on social media sites such as Twitter and Instagram to identify messages or images. *Run or Dye* included their own hashtag #runordyeuk, where all hash tagged images can easily be viewed. Many of these images included indicators of the affective and visual tropes at play, including #dowhatmakesyouhappy #healthmatters #runforhappiness #fit #athlete and #getfitandcolourful (see fig 5.7). Due to the striking similarity within colour 5s, *Run or Dye* and *The Color Run* are often considered as one entity, with some *Run or Dye* participants hashtagging #thecolorrun in their posts. In 2015, the company furthered their commitment to engaging women by twinning with cosmetics brand Clinique, offering make up and cosmetic items as part of the goodie bag package, and the national This Girl Can campaign, celebrating women’s fitness “regardless of shape, size or ability.”⁵⁶⁶ The gendering of space and the image is most clearly identifiable through the demographic that *Run or Dye* aims to attract. The

⁵⁶⁴ Coleman, R. (2009) *The becoming of bodies: Girls, Images, Experience*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. p. 92.

⁵⁶⁵ Murray, D.C. (2015) Notes to the self: the visual culture of selfies in the age of social media. *Consumption Markets and Culture*. 18(6), p. 490.

⁵⁶⁶ Sport England (2016) Our Work. Available at: <https://www.sportengland.org/our-work/women/this-girl-can/> [Accessed 10 November 2016]

organisers referred to *Run or Dye* UK as “a girlie event” and that the presentation of women is central to their marketing campaigns:

We just post pictures of girls covered in colour and they look good, they look like they are having fun and everyone wants to do it. Social media has just been crucial.⁵⁶⁷



Fig 5.7 Post-race selfie (2014). Source: Instagram

The ‘cosmetic’ is one of the primary lenses through which Western culture views colour.⁵⁶⁸ For David Batchelor, “if the cosmetic is essentially anything it is essentially visible...essentially superficial and thinner than the skin onto which it is applied. Cosmetics adorn, embellish, disguise.”⁵⁶⁹ The cosmetic application of colour not only decorates the body, but visual culture; the visual realm’s surplus of images that characterises our postmodern scopic regime.⁵⁷⁰ Within this visual realm, colour seizes consumer attention and saturates social media with a visual cacophony of images, celebrating both the ludic practices of Holi and its racing reincarnation through *Run or Dye*. Clark later joked that they should market the event to men because of the interest women have shown:

⁵⁶⁷ Conversation with Clark, June 2014.

⁵⁶⁸ See Elliot, C. (2007) Regimes of vision and products of colour. *Senses and Society*. 2. (1). p. 48.

⁵⁶⁹ Batchelor, D. (2000) *Chromophobia*. Reaktion Books: London. p. 52

⁵⁷⁰ See Jay, M. (2002) That visual turn: The advent of visual culture. *Journal of Visual Culture*. 1(1) pp. 87-92

We should be like, ‘come on, look how many girls are gonna be there!’
[laughs]⁵⁷¹

The association with colour as feminine, as discussed in architectural theory is at odds with the feminist interpretation of urban space as masculine. Thinking carefully through the decoration of the materiality of urban form, there are considerable resonances with architecture and the (gendered) fashioning of the human body in the discussion of colour. In Loos’ *The Law of Dressing* (1898), influenced by Semper, parallels were drawn between the dress on a human body and the dressing of a built structure. Loos parallels the design of clothing with that of architecture as a feminine, sensual, ornamental visual exercise. Women are seen as the ever more conservative force retaining a less civilised and superficial fascination with colour and the decorative. The cladding takes the place of the ornament but is still as in Semper’s analysis, distinct from structure, liberated from it. Architecturally, colour has taken a secondary design concern, but in these practices, colour is primary. Considering these questions in line with colour and the feminine intervening in masculine urban space invites us to question the political efficacy of colour and cultural urban practice. Covering the city in colour, with its cosmetic associations and designer dressage suggests a temporary feminisation of typically masculine urban space. As a political intervention, colouring the city in this way acts as a kind of cosmetic vandalism, a cultural mediation, altering the time and space of mundane urban London into the essence and sensibilities of Holi.

Throughout this chapter I have observed and questioned the way colour is appropriated onto others, my role in the coproduction of ludic atmospheres and the bodies that are produced and made visible on social and spatial media. In the next section, I turn to my own autoethnographic experience with the colour 5 race *Run or Dye* in London.

⁵⁷¹ Conversation with Clark, June 2014.

Experiencing happiness



Fig 5.8 *Run or Dye* event, London, 27th September 2014. Source: Author's own.

Stop giving the bags out; just give them their dye! a terse voice cries from the collection tent.

Hundreds of hands start grabbing free t-shirts, snatching wristbands and tearing small, precious packets of coloured dye. I am waiting to receive my 'Swag Bag', a collection of merchandise goodies including a bright pink bracelet, some temporary *Run or Dye* tattoos, a branded *Run or Dye* t-shirt and one small bag of dye. People start screaming as they open and make use of their packet of dye. The frantic handing over of dye packs was just how I imagined humanitarian aid to look like in times of desperate need.⁵⁷²

Today I am a colour runner. I am standing alongside the giant ExCel exhibition centre by the Royal Victoria Dock in east London, penned into a small space with hundreds of other runners. I pull my white *Run or Dye* race t-shirt over my head, safety-pin my runner number to my top, tighten my bandana headband and make my way to the starting line with the other runners. There are around

⁵⁷² Fieldnote diary entry: Pre-race. 27th September 2014.

two thousand participants in attendance; a much smaller, more intimate race than the more popular *The Color Run*. Runners come in all shapes and sizes, decked in tutus and headbands.

“I haven’t got any blue!” a female runner shrieks to her friends. With a quick glance over her shoulder, she walks up to another runner, freshly coloured in blue, and surreptitiously rubs her shoulder across his back. Her friends applauded her courage as she proudly pointed to the smudgy, blue stain across the top of her arm. It was at this point I realised that I was remarkably *white*. I needed to ‘go native’⁵⁷³ like the others, and proceeded to open up one of my free pink dye bags, sprinkling it over my head and rubbing it into my skin.⁵⁷⁴

The process of going native, orientated *within* and *part of* the milieu of the research, collapses the boundary between self and other, between researcher and researched. However, it is through transforming the surface of the self that enables me to move towards the other to integrate myself within the spaces I am researching. In order to *feel* the processes around me and be receptive to the socio-material interactions and the atmospheric flows of the race, I ‘other’ my/self. This othering - colouring the self in order to be like the others - echoes mimetic modes of behaviour, and play is integral to this. Playing works through aspects of mimicked activities that are somewhat mysterious: identities, social relationships and socio-material practices are played with as details are re-imagined⁵⁷⁵. When the runner described above noted that he was missing blue, he was mimicking and responding to the behaviour of those around him who were colouring themselves and others. Unlike Bentham’s definition of play as non-utilitarian, othering my/self to be like those around me is purposeful. Using play, I negotiate my ‘knowing body’ by mimicking what I have seen others do. I perform what I am expected to perform. I experience myself in this space and this space exists through my embodied experience. My own practices co-produce the lively, multicoloured space I situate myself within, and the atmosphere I help create.

There is a warm up preamble to both keep the runners entertained while they wait and also to ensure our bodies are prepared for the next five kilometres. Two young men in charge of this part of the race, one of them an excitable Canadian donned in sunglasses, bouffant hair and a snapback hat, the other his

⁵⁷³ Fuller, D. (1999) Part of the action, or going native? *Area* 31 pp. 221-227.

⁵⁷⁴ Field notes from *Run or Dye* London, 27th September at the ExCel Centre, Royal Victoria Dock, London.

⁵⁷⁵ Katz, C. (2004) *Growing up Global: Economic Restructuring and Children's Everyday Lives*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

cheerful partner in a branded *Run or Dye* t-shirt, get the runners excited by throwing bags of colour and merchandise down from high up along the ramps around in the ExCel Centre car park. Using their megaphones, their cheering and laughter co-produces the emerging party atmosphere that starts to unfold, mutating between feeling like a race and a festival.⁵⁷⁶

The distinctive festival atmosphere is co-produced not only by the comperes and their performances, but the performances of the runners colouring themselves and their chatting, laughing and playing. The collective upsurge of human activity and non-human material interaction including *gulal* and other commercial items such as race day merchandise generates a particular intensity that I, as a runner, can feel at the start. I feel the nerves and excitement from others around me, a little confusing, since competition is kept to a minimum in the race. From the collection of merchandise and dye to my point at the start line, the changing sensation of anticipation, preparation and play ebbs and flows, dissolves and explodes again in the moments of intensity that tints the atmosphere with lucidity.

There is countdown. *10! 9! 8!* The crowd cheers and joins in as powdered dye soars up, collapsing over us. *4! 3! 2!* The eruption of a loud foghorn starts the race. We are released, a stream of multicolour moving at a mediocre pace along the Victoria Docks Basin. I approached the first dye zone at kilometre one. The Dye Zone was split into two channels; buckets of orange lined up along the left hand side, and on the right, those that preferred not to be coloured had the choice of running in a clear pathway. The right hand side was like an empty, disused hard shoulder on a motorway.

As runners passed through the orange zone ahead of me, they raised their hands in joy and pirouetted as waves of powder dissolved in the air and cascaded down over them. Volunteer ‘dyers’ scooped up some coloured powder in their hands and threw it as fast as they could over everybody. I took a deep breath in as I approached the zone, face crinkled and arms outstretched like I was walking in the dark, waiting for a torrent of colour pummel against my face. I released a jubilant screech as I felt the powder trickle over my forehead and onto my chest. The anticipation felt like the moment someone is about to spray you in the face with a water pistol, an odd mixture of expectation, fear and delight.

You’ve got to get down and roll in it! One of the dye throwers instructed us.

⁵⁷⁶ Fieldnote diary entry: The warm up. 27th September 2014.

I paused as the zone became increasingly congested with runners. The air was filled with squeals, cheers and laughter. It felt unnatural in that moment to simply oblige, drop to my knees and reproduce some of the performances I had seen prior to the race - snow angels, belly skids, or an imaginary front crawl.⁵⁷⁷

Although it was not quite the tropical kaleidoscopic storm I had expected, it occurred to me that colour itself is not what made me feel *happiness*. Colour - its texture, history, symbolism - in itself, did not *produce* these sensations or feelings in me. Indeed, those ludic, joyous sensations were very much present within and around the space, but locating its nexus, its core, was impossible to map. In fact, identifying happiness in itself, as an emotion, was challenging for me. Within the range of emotions I experienced I felt the *excitement* of the start line, the *playfulness* of colouring oneself and another, *uplifted* by the sounds of the seasonal summer party anthems, *affected* by the smiles and the laughter around me. My own experience of happiness is negotiated through a complex network of these social and environmental factors. Further, the ever-changing rhythms of emotion, atmosphere and affect is tied to the changing urban configurations of the race. Being *in* and *encountering* the dye zone mobilised a range of sensations within me that I did not experience between dye zones. Taking the race as a whole, the race was part of a carefully planned, collective formation and reformation of a Holi imaginary, punctuated by moments of lucidity, excitement and happiness through an engagement with the dye zones which intensified the farther along the race I went as my body is given another coat of colour. Furthermore, having been present at *The Color Run* yellow zone two months earlier, I use my prior knowledge and experience to attune myself to the space before I arrive. Thinking through how affects and practices produce place, Duff argues this “subjective orientation to place, signalling the various affects, moods and capacities that might be enacted in that place” contributed to my experience of the dye zone and the thickening of the atmosphere around me.⁵⁷⁸

I consider myself a healthy, active person. After emerging from the blue dye zone, I made a conscious decision to run at a significantly slower pace than I might have done. Moving in this pace felt unnatural, but running faster made me feel like I was missing out on the full experience. I noted that few people were even ‘running’, in the sense that I understand running; long, meaningful sides, powerful arms, light on

⁵⁷⁷ Fieldnote diary entry: During the race. 27th September 2014.

⁵⁷⁸ Duff, C. (2010) On the role of affect in the production of place. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. 30, pp. 1103-1112.

the feet, beads of sweat, determined faces. Instead, my imagination of running was replaced by causal jogging, chatting with friends, signing along to music, laughter, jokes, sighing, complaining and coughing. I was one of thousands of other smiling, playful bodies defamiliarising the grey, monochrome dankness of the city, being cheered as I jogged past a couple having their spaghetti carbonara lunch. This provokes a counter discourse of healthy practice, working against the exertion of moving, exercising bodies that the race promotes. As such, this counter discourse produces locally specific knowledges that render the *Run or Dye* event physically unchallenging. The playful, recreational running promoted by thematic 5k races like *Run or Dye* became a site of contestation for me. Mobility is secondary; the aesthetic is primary. Around half way through the race, I tried to overtake a group of walkers. In response, another runner shouted sarcastically “alright, love. Sprint finish...” unimpressed by my enthusiasm. I was taking the race too seriously by running.

Having run through all three of the previous dye zones, I felt a pressure to enact a specific kind of playfulness at the final kilometre. I felt coloured, but most of the powder seemed to have dusted off as I made my way through the course. The pavements were decorated with blotches of coloured powder from the runners that passed before us. I recall feeling excited at the prospect of play and prepared to engage with and inflect the tactics and knowledge used from my observations in the Yellow Zone:

The final zone of the race was met with a signpost, decorated with the characteristic *Run or Dye* colour splat that read ‘Mount Dye’. Mount Dye was a 5-degree incline ramp that lead to the back of the delivery area of the ExCel Centre. As I ran past a set of bins, I could see another zone approaching me, a pink zone, which was full of children rolling around and playing. I recalled the volunteer in the orange zone and her instruction, *you’ve got to get down and roll in it*. I decided to go for it. I went through the left hand side, receiving a face full of powder. The consistency of the colour is much like talcum powder and had a neutral, dusty taste. The *gulal* had a particular affinity to the small hairs on my body and seemed to be attracted to eyebrows and lashes which made me feel a bit itchy, rather than full of joy and pleasure that I had expected. I look across at a child playing in a pile of colour with a friend. A girl next to me seemed to have the same idea, nudged me and said, “Come on then” with a smile. I dropped down onto my front awkwardly. In a desperate attempt to think through some of the performative displays of the coloured self I had seen in previous colour 5s, I performed an unusual manoeuvre that resembled a turtle pushing sand with its

arms over my imaginary shell. The manoeuvre attracted other racers into the pile of *gulal* and others began performing other aquatic imitations.⁵⁷⁹



Fig: 5.9. Dancing runners approaching Mount Dye. Source: Author's own.

⁵⁷⁹ Fieldnote diary entry: Performing and play 27th September 2014.

During the race, there were lots of other bodies around. Tourists with cameras, cycling commuters, community members, visitors to the ExCel Centre or the very beautiful architectural structure, the Crystal. Negotiating the changing textures and inclines of pathways, weaving around and slowing down for others, there lacked a distinct sense of everydayness that is common in the coming together of people for a run. Running *Run or Dye* was far from the ordinary. Passers-by stared, some looking perplexed, others finding it amusing. I was little a splash of colour, jogging through a relatively quiet part of east London.

The gathering together of hundreds of moving, Holi-inspired figures is a transgressive act of urban mobility, an occupation of space. During the race, I was a mobile advertisement for the cultural appropriation of an ethnically marked tradition, originating thousands of miles away. In unpacking the multiplicities and complexities of colour in these events, perhaps it is an unusual step to critically consider the pervasion of *whiteness*. Departing from the material colour for a moment, careful observation of the comments section in the instagram picture in figure 5.10 highlights an important question around the particular bodies that *Run or Dye* attract. Responding to a comment, the instagram account holder replied that the friend who had accompanied her during the race thought *Run or Dye* was “one of the top three whitest things he’s ever done.” Holi’s devotion to overcome racialised colour through colouring one another to all look the same is itself problematised when considering the socio-demographic attracted by the events.



Fig 5.10 “In the top 3 whitest things he’s ever done” (2014). Source: Instagram

Placed in the context of multiculturalism, the embracing of other religious traditions or celebrating otherness is an important step in understanding the climate of colour based events. The focus of religion and the contestation between the sacred space of the Hindu tradition and the profane forces of entrepreneurial action are two forces in tension with one another in the cultural translation of events inspired by religious celebrations. The production and consumption of these colour events could be criticised for the vandalism of cultural appropriation. In the next section, I map the relationship between social cohesion and whiteness, the levelling practices of Holi and its relationship to repair and the moving temporalities of emotion. Moving from a more individualised self culture and colouring one self, the next section progress to consider the conviviality oft shared experience and the role ethnic difference - or not - plays in the context of Holi's egalitarian values. In order to explore the key tenets of Holi as an appropriated adventure in multicuture, ethnicity and difference, the concluding part of this chapter turns to the third and final ethnographic scene, the *Holi Festival of Colours* in London.

Whiteness and colour: Difference, multicuture and cohesion

Clearly rave and festival-style Holi events for non-Hindus are a massive business...and there's a demand, but it feels uncomfortable that a trio of Europeans - one of whom experienced Holi in Delhi in 2011 - with little understanding of Holi's religious, cultural or social dimensions, are touring a loose approximation of Holi yet trading off its name around the world to make loadsa [sic] money.⁵⁸⁰

Holi festivals in Western contexts have been criticised for (in)appropriation. Translating non-Western practices such as Holi, into Western contexts is controversial. Cultural appropriation - the repurposing or adopting features and practices of cultural traditions - is often viewed as a neocolonial practice intent on

⁵⁸⁰ Verma, R. (2015) How the festival of Holi has become a textbook case for cultural appropriation. In. New Statesman. 11 September 2015. Available at: <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/religion/2015/09/how-festival-holi-has-become-textbook-case-cultural-appropriation-profit> [Accessed 28 December, 2016]

commercialising difference. The white Western world's co-opting of minority cultures practices, borrowing culture and essentialising ethnic identities, occupies a politically contested ground. Criticised for losing the traditional cultural aspects but "keeping the colours"⁵⁸¹, the emergence of secular, Holi-inspired, for profit festivals troubles one particular historical message of Holi; celebrating good over evil and ending conflict. The incorporation of the Holi aesthetic might then be considered an appropriation of ethnicity mainly for profit making purposes. Against the grain of inclusivity celebrated by the traditional Holi, these new, culturally appropriated, commodified urban realities reflect the interests of the elite; raising questions around who and for what purpose these events are held. There is a distinct suggestion of white appropriation, thinking through the cultural translation of Holi, *Run or Dye* and *The Color Run* as a commercialised iteration of an ethnically marked tradition. Echoing bell hook's exploration of racial difference, the ludic consumption of *gula* is part of a wider cultural, ethnic and racial commodification "to enhance the white palate - that the Other will be eaten, consumed and forgotten."⁵⁸² Commodifying Holi problematises the distinctions between appropriation and translation, between authenticity and a counterfeit. Through my own engagement with *Run or Dye*, *The Color Run* and, later, the Holi *Festival of Colours* in London, the ethnic make up of these events is overwhelmingly white. The consumption of Holi-inspired events with non-Asian, white communities gives rise to questions around not only who these events are made for, but the cultural politics underpinning the commercialisation of difference.

I asked Clark about the key messages of *Run or Dye* in line with one of the core values behind the traditional Holi festival in order to see which aspects of Holi *Run or Dye* brings out. The idea around community cohesion and the commercialisation of Holi became clear:

C: All of our *Run or Dye* messaging is based off the Holi festival. We try to keep as much of that message as we spread it around the world as we can... [During] the [traditional] Holi festival, there is no exercising, which is good for a lot of people, it has a broader appeal.

H: Following on what you said about the key messages of your event, would you say one of the main ideas behind the race is to bring people together?

⁵⁸¹ Agrawal, N. (2013) *Dye-ing Culture: Whitewashing Holi since 2012*. Brown Girl Magazine. April 2 2013. Available at <http://www.browngirlmagazine.com/2013/04/color-run-controversy/> [Accessed 28 December, 2016]

⁵⁸² hooks, b. (1992) *Black looks: race and representation*. Boston, South End Press, p. 39.

C: Oh yeah, absolutely. It's a for profit company, but the owner is so focused on spreading a positive message. Whenever we reach out to any business partners, the first thing the owner will talk about is what we are all about and our message and what we come from because some of the Colour 5 companies don't care about that and they just want to make money while they can, on a trend. This company is all about spreading a positive message to everyone and giving reason for living.⁵⁸³

Echoing Swami Vivekananda, a revered Indian Hindu monk, who preached to American audiences in 1896 “when the Occident wants to learn about the spirit, about God, about the soul, about meaning and the mystery of this universe, he must sit at the feet of the Orient to learn.”⁵⁸⁴ In the above quotation Clark makes clear that circulating the “message” of Holi is central to *Run or Dye*. Instead of relying on the referent of moving, coloured bodies, there is a deeper sense of Holi that Clark seeks to mobilise. These ideas are framed as a “positive message” and sits well within wider ideas of holistic living, wellbeing and self-care. Sensitive to the criticism of commercialisation other Colour 5s have been subject to, Clark's focus on spreading a positive message to “everyone” is culturally significant for Holi. Despite the criticisms, the strengthening of our secular fabric through non-Hindus engagement with the event is celebration of the egalitarianism Holi seeks to promote. Furthermore, mobilising aspects of Holi through the imbrication of exercise and morality is important in today's concern with health and wellbeing. Active leisure can be “understood as political in the sense that they are neoliberal practices implicated in the everyday exercise of power over the self.”⁵⁸⁵ Placed within the context of an increasingly secular society, individuality morality has become fragmented, perhaps explaining why “the pursuit of health and fitness has become a path of individual and moral action.”⁵⁸⁶ Thinking through morality in this vein, the celebration of Holi combined with the discourses of exercise can in part help understand the popularity and success of Colour 5s.

Multiculturalism, cohesion and happiness - “giving a reason for living” - share a complex relationship. With an increasingly diverse ethnic make up, London in particular is a melting pot for cultural difference. Happiness is not individual; it is social. The drive for a better sense of social cohesion is one of the key messages in

⁵⁸³ Conversation with Clark, *Run or Dye*, in London June 2014.

⁵⁸⁴ Hatcher, B. (1999) *Eclecticism and Modern Hindu discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 98

⁵⁸⁵ Fullagar, S. (2002) Governing the healthy body: discourses of leisure and lifestyle in Australian health policy. *Heath: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness and Medicine*. 6(1), p. 69.

⁵⁸⁶ Conrad, P. (1994) Wellness as virtue: Mortality and the pursuit of health. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* (18), pp. 388-389.

Cameron's Gross National Happiness Index. Trevor Philips, the Chair of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights in the UK, argued that conflict or violence emerges "when people look very different, and think they are different, never touch or interact."⁵⁸⁷ Unhappiness is read as caused not simply *by* diversity, but by the failure of people who are different to interact. Philips recommends that communities integrate by sharing an activity, like football, "that takes us out of our ethnicity and connects us with the people of different ethnicities...then I think we can crack the problem."⁵⁸⁸

Maintaining the perceived authenticity of the event in line with its religious connections, Clark discussed how the *Run or Dye* group saw the five kilometre race as a trend, visualising a greater longevity with the translation of the Holi festival itself rather than just a Colour 5:

We are starting to now do the Holi festival because that's where the whole idea comes from. I don't know what it is about the 5k as trendy, but I do see it as a trend. Its popularity will rise and then fall. We feel like the 5k's are just a trend [...] this year it has been huge in the UK and next year it will be great, but in two years it will fizzle. But the Holi festival, the festival of colours, has been going on for 2,000 years, and we feel like it has sustainability in any city. I don't know what it is about the Holi festival that is more sustainable, we still use the same colour element, it's still the same colour corn starch, we throw it on people, and we do the same thing at the very end of the race, we have a big colour throw and music.⁵⁸⁹

Although the main aim of *Run or Dye* is not to be the perfect replication of a Holi festival, the commitment to obtaining the best colour for the event is important. Clark assured me that the cost of a Colour 5 race is "extremely expensive...at least a pound of colour per person. The colour is what makes it so expensive."⁵⁹⁰ The materiality of the colour itself is critical. Sourced in India, Clark described the colour as "pretty much the most vibrant colour in the world."⁵⁹¹ Having seen the role of colour in *The Color Run*, I was curious as to what Clark thought colour brings to his event:

H: What *is it* about colour, do you think?

⁵⁸⁷ Phillips, T. (2006) *The Happiness Formula*. BBC Television.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁹ Conversation with Clark, *Run or Dye*, in London. June 2014.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid.

C: I think it's a few things. One people like just letting go. It's a way for people to let go, have fun, there is no alcohol involved, it's all sober fun, and there's colour and they're covered and they can just scream and throw their hands in the air and have a good time. I think people believing in religion, believing in God, that stuff is just down - that's been studied, that's just how it is. We all have a need to be a part of something bigger than us [...] as church and chapel numbers go down, they still want to be a part of something bigger than themselves and they see these events and see it as replacing that. They still yearn for something bigger than themselves.⁵⁹²

Clark's response reinforces the ludic potentialities of colour as a device that enables people to let go, have (sober) fun, scream and have a good time. He does not claim that colour *itself* allows these behaviours to emerge, but again, suggests that the co-experiencing these events through coming together is key. Ludicity is framed as a collective experience. Secondly, Clark's response points towards a wider concern of religious decline in the West. Particularly since the 1960s, measures of 'religiosity' - church membership in particular, attendance and religious attitudes have been trending downwards. Approaching the production of colour events within the wider cultural and religious discourses, colour is viewed as having the potential to enchant space. Religious spaces themselves "quiver with affective energy."⁵⁹³ Reproducing the discursive practices of Holi does not necessarily re-create it, but reinforces associations Holi has with play, community and friendship through the materiality of colour. Colour is a recognisable, visual meaning making tool within the culturally embedded practice of Holi.

Echoing the carnivalesque festivities of Holi, at the end of both *The Color Run* and *Run or Dye* is a party. The carnivalesque element to the event is a unique and major attraction to Colour 5s events and for many is the prominent feature of the day that most closely resembles the theatricality of Holi. This celebratory, social gathering of people is significant in unwrapping the wider questions of repair central to this thesis. The final section of this chapter takes this particular aspect into sharper focus, examining the significance of the *Holi Festival of Colours* in London, transforming place into a temporary, aesthetic ludic environment.

⁵⁹²Ibid.

⁵⁹³ Thrift, N. (2004) Intensities of feeling: towards a politics of affect. *Geografiska Annaler B*. 86. pp. 57

Practicing religion

Sitting on a lonely bench in the middle of the dry grassy area inside the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in Stratford, London, is Max, one of the organisers of the *Festival of Colours* I am scheduled to interview. He is on the phone, chatting urgently in German, finalising details with his team and nervously fiddling with his baseball cap. My initial curiosity now I am sat in the unfolding space of the Holi festival in London is why Holi is being brought into another context. Max plucks at the badge on his Holi Festival shirt which reads “be happy”:

We want to make people happy. Colour makes people happy. It makes the guys more confident to ask the girls for a dance. It brings people together.⁵⁹⁴

GmbH's Holi *Festival of Colours* is the UK's major, public Holi celebration outside of Asia. Much like *The Color Run*, the core emotional trope running through the event is the significant dedication to happiness. Furthermore, the event reinforces one of the other key messages the traditional Holi seeks to deliver, one concerning “bringing people together.” Welcoming difference and removing social barriers is a key feature in UK government for arts and the communities.⁵⁹⁵ At European level, cultural festivals emphasised as being “vital for promoting intercultural dialogue...offering a concentrated possibility of exchange and enrichment.”⁵⁹⁶ Framed by recent government policy to encourage inclusion and cohesion and transcending the geographical barriers between celebrating Holi in its native context and celebrating Holi in a local setting, the *Festival of Colours* increases social capital building and promotes wellbeing through engaging with communities.⁵⁹⁷ Bringing people together through cultural festivals drawn from an ethnically marked tradition runs the risk of could opposition:

We had some small opposition from religious parts because they did not like this idea, but we are not a religious festival. We just want to take these wonderful

⁵⁹⁴ Conversation with Maxim, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Stratford, London. June 28th 2014.

⁵⁹⁵ Department for Culture, Media and Sport, (2010). What we do: arts and community. Available from: www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/arts/3206.aspx. [Accessed 24 January, 2017]

⁵⁹⁶ European Commission. (2008a) Arts festivals join in support for the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue Available from: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/21&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>. [Accessed 24 January, 2017]

⁵⁹⁷ Putnam, R. Leonardi & Nanetti, R.Y. (1993) *Making democracy work*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press; Stiglitz, J.E. Sen, A. & Fitoussi, J.P. (2009). *Report by the Commissions on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress*. Available at: www.stiglitz-sen-fitoussi.fr. [Accessed 3 May, 2016]

elements and bring them here to you. Not everybody can go to India to experience them, so we bring it to them, by going to different cities.⁵⁹⁸

Seen as “good promotion for India”,⁵⁹⁹ Max makes clear that while certain traditions of Holi are reproduced, religion is not. Despite festivals imitating spaces of pilgrimage in their congregation of bodies together, and the religious practices, rituals and sentiments of the Hinduism of Holi, Max is clear that religion is just the concept that enables Holi to exist. Instead, the *Festival of Colours* imitates religious practice.

We want them to be happy. This is our claim for this year. We started in 2012, but last year it was really popular and we had a really quick growth. We saw that this festival really created a smile on the face of the people. It’s really impressive. You see if you go to different festivals, you see people celebrating to the stage, celebrating to the artists [because of the music]. Here people are coming because of the colours of course, but the whole concept. The people are the stars. They’re celebrating themselves [...] the concept of the colours celebrates bringing people together. When they throw the colours in the air, they are all equally coloured and are just getting in touch easier.⁶⁰⁰

In celebrating *themselves* as opposed to the traditional celebration of the Spring that Holi observes, in part secularises the translation of Holi. One of the principal characteristics of many ancient harvest festivals is its dedication to being ‘of the people and for the people’, as opposed to the distinction between performers and audience. Although celebrating oneself for oneself is central in ancient festivals the contemporary iteration of Holi that GmbH engineers, there is still a distinct and disruptive commercialisation of Holi at play. Although happiness, cohesion and wellbeing are central to both the Hindu and London festivals, lessening the emphasis on religion disrupts the authenticity of the event. However, in keeping the distinctive, active aesthetics of Holi serves as a metaphor for encountering difference, history and culture through the bodily practices and shared experience of colouring. In enacting this shared experience, they are doing so whilst being “equally coloured.” This creates a complex paradox where difference is both encountered and erased. The erasure of difference by colouring oneself and one another is critical to Holi in its celebration of multiculturalism - the ethnic levelling of colouring each other in order for everyone to be

⁵⁹⁸ Conversation with Maxim, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Stratford, London. June 28th 2014.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid.

the same is a key, productive method to engage with the multiplicities of ethnic, religious and racial difference.

Considering the power of colour as conceptual leaves the efficacy of colour itself open. When I asked Max what it was about colour specifically, much like Clark, he responded to its ludic qualities enabled through collective engagement:

Do you want my opinion on it? From my experience, this effect of doing something together, like this [...] they come together and celebrate together. It's a pretty amazing view and feeling when you walk through those people. And I think it is the action itself [the hourly colour throws] - everyone is doing it, there isn't anyone not doing it - everybody gets coloured. I think colours bring them together. If you would throw dirt, or whatever, it would not be the same. Colours just make people happier.⁶⁰¹

It is clear that there is little understood about what it is about colour that has this discursive ability to be at once a *concept* that can make people happy, but also the material that when you *engage with it*, "just makes people happier." The collaborative and responsive togetherness of the event echoes that of the traditional Holi, and the aims of other translations in the UK such as *The Color Run* and its emotional promise of happiness. Although the event encourages everyone to attend, much like the Colour 5s, the event targets a young female audience to the event:

M: Everybody is welcome. The events are 18+ because we serve alcohol, but our target group 19-25. We attract mainly girls.

H: Why is that?

M: Because of the colours! They can present themselves, take selfies...⁶⁰²

The public, religious festival has become the central nexus for the celebration of ethnic, cultural and collective identity - identities that demand to be represented, even in secular space. Again, the coloured bodies presented during Holi are visually framed through social media platforms and made visible through them. Enabling opportunities to change the self and record them through the imagery, selfies of the changing self and the material textures enabled by *gulaal* distils a temporality where other cultural and religious realities are celebrated. Imagining a kind of multicultural

⁶⁰¹ Ibid.

⁶⁰² Ibid.

citizenship, the decorating of *gula* for selfies embraces a multicultural landscape reimagined through colour in an urban backdrop.

As the interview continues, I tell him that I am planning on coming to the festival on Sunday and would like to take notes:

Sure, we'll get you a backstage pass. Call me just before 12 noon. I'll come and meet you. Then you can have the full experience.⁶⁰³

The temporalities of the *Festival of Colours*

The grass is dry and lightly dusted with colour from the first day of the festival last night; greens, purples, yellows. The festivalgoers relax with friends on the grass with beer. The festival operates with its own currency - a token system - which you can get in the one of the stalls and must pay on site with. Litter pickers pinch at chippie sticks tossed across the grass while paramedics sit in their tents sipping tea. There are plenty of food stalls offering traditional festival fare - Angus burgers, British meat, pies, pizza and a lone Indian street food stall. The air smells harsh and chalky and I can pick up a warm, greasy smell the closer I wander to the food stalls.

Although there is music, chatting and playing, the overall atmosphere at this point is relatively subdued. There is a meticulous searching system with security guards at the entrance, opening bags, smelling bottles of sunscreen and peering between cards in wallets. In the main festival area, people cluster into friendship circles sipping beer. There is a distinct dress code in operation - flowery headbands on the girls, sunglasses, wellies for the festival atmosphere, short shorts to soak up the sun that hasn't come out yet. People walk around like two legged white canvases waiting to be painted - crisp white t-shirts, white tote bags, white shorts, white converse. Bags of coloured powder hang off peoples belts like ammunition. The attendees of the festival were remarkably similar across all three events in terms of socio-demographic characteristics. Observable ethnicity at all three events were overwhelmingly white British, despite east London's remarkable Asian population.⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰³ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁴ Author field notes, Holi Festival of Colours, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London. June 29th 2014.



Fig 5.11 The Festival of Colours, The Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, June 2014.
Source: Evening Standard.

In sharing these intimate moments there is a temporality to the engagements with one another enmeshed in the vibrant diversity of London. The temporalities of the *Festival of Colours* unfold in multiple ways. Through the hourly colour throws, the change of music and tempo, the steady increase of attendees, the carnivalesque atmosphere is an unstable, flux and flow of feelings and interactions, the irruptions and interruptions of the sacred appear in moments. Atmosphere, as a geological concept, has a special kind of gravity towards it that is inescapable. Unlike the Yellow Zone where I could shuffle away to gather my thoughts and my breath, the atmosphere around Holi was immersive, and the only way I could be away from it was to leave the venue and not return. Still, this is not to say there is a permanence or consistency to the atmosphere. It most clearly piqued at each hourly throw of colour. The first scheduled throw of colour at 3pm. This was the moment where the atmosphere is most deeply felt, the most visible enactment of the aesthetic of Holi. In unison, 15,000 people count down from ten to one, holding their coloured bags of powder aloft ready to leap up and down and cover each other. The moment is a cacophony of screaming excitement, infused with the thumping bass line of a dance track mixed in with a Bhangra

inflection. The colourful play of Radha and Krishna is relived and re-enacted as the crowd play with the colours. Throwing the chalky coloured powders over each other disguises us all. The decorative social homogeneity is a key tenet at the core of the spirit of Holi, bringing people together irrespective of class, sex, caste or age. This concealing is a kind of deception. The playful revelry of colour comes to life during these moments.

Recalling both the ancient Holi festival and the contemporary, Western inflection in London, bringing people together and building social cohesion in order for diverse groups to come together and play is one of its central pursuits. The *Holi Festival of Colours* in London enables Londoners to engage in public rituals, cross-cultural and religious encounters. Through these experiences, the fears and anxieties generated by the inevitability of multiethnic possibility are confronted. Drawing on the work of social capital theorist Robert Putnam, the temporalities of bridging and bonding - the building blocks of social relationships between existing and new acquaintances - is best demonstrated during the changing temporalities of the festival. At the start of the event, groups of people I observed who arrived together interacted with one another, playing with colour, often drinking together and eating together. The moments of 'bonding' were interrupted during the hourly colour throws as they found themselves in close proximity with others, colouring one another inviting further 'bridging' engagements with strangers. The hourly colour throws were the clearest example of the temporal bridging social interactions enabled through play. At the next hour, as the mass of attendees come together again in random formations, new bridging social capital took place as strangers jumped, playfully pushed and decorated each other with coloured powder. These temporalities worked in tandem with the atmospheric ebbing and flowing of the event, as the most colour, music, laughter and screaming filled the chalk, purple air.

As well as being dubbed the 'festival of colours', Holi is also known as the 'festival of love'. The original spring festival is an ancient festival celebrating fertility and harvest. Like *Run or Dye*, who dubbed their 2014 tour the 'Give Love' tour, the *Festival of Colours* draws on the idea of love:

It creates relationships. Shy guys can get in touch with girls easier and get to know them at our festivals.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰⁵ Conversation with Maxim, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Stratford, London. June 28th 2014.

Holi embraces universalist ideas of peace, love and unity. Despite religion being a parochial part of the *Festival of Colours*, love is one of the key tenets of the ancient Holi festival where Radha and Krishna engaged in love play. The encouragement to not only mix people together, but also, the social proclivities of creating relationships is of great interest to *The Festival of Colours*, who announced a Valentines Day special event in 2016. Thinking through previous studies of the ancient Holi festival undertaken by anthropologist D.B Miller, his findings raises questions around the characteristic intersex rivalry that in part complicates the theory that social capital is simply bridged and bonded during Holi celebrations. Conversely, Miller's argument is that Holi is a "momentary escape for those who are most affected by the vexatiousness of society that results in the performance of highly structured and restrictive roles."⁶⁰⁶ Situating the relationship between the popular female demographic of not just the *Festival of Colours* but *The Color Run* and *Run or Dye* with the observations of D.B Miller is inextricably bound up in questions around feminist politics. As I observed in my fieldnotes:

As expected, the festival is incredibly popular with young women, who decorate themselves carefully with the coloured powder, avoiding eyes, hair and lips. During play, although they often throw colour on their friendship groups, the biggest targets are the boys. A young lad slices open his packet of colour and jousts it in the direction of a small group of girls, who look at the younger end of the 19-25 age bracket. As soon as the powder falls onto one of the girls' hair, she lets out a scream and all three of them charge towards the man boisterously with their powder and empty the entire contents on him, laughing and high five-ing as they leave him rubbing blue out of his gelled hair.⁶⁰⁷

Festivals, according to Waterman, act on consumers in ways that endow them with personal qualities that can be displayed in widening contexts, providing symbols of 'having been there'.⁶⁰⁸ The *in situ* consumption of Holi in London is consumed at a considerable distance from its origins and enacts a temporary, collective identity. This temporary identity was best observed once the festival had finished, not long after midnight, when Stratford Underground station became packed with bodies of mucky multicolour. I saw men pouring water over their hair and scrubbing off powder from

⁶⁰⁶ Miller, D. B. (1973) Holi-Dulhendi: Licensed rebellion in a North Indian village. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*. Series 1. Vol 3, issue 1.

⁶⁰⁷ Author fieldnotes, Holi Festival of Colours, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London. June 29th 2014.

⁶⁰⁸ Waterman, S. (1998) Carnivals for elites? The cultural politics of arts festivals. *Progress in Human Geography*. 22. pp. 54-74.

their quiffs, and women wielding packs of make up wipes, carefully clearing away colour from eyelashes and lips. In sharing the colour experience with others, they equally share the de-colouring experience, too, as each one strips themselves of their cultural cloak.

Concluding thoughts: the emotional labour of repair

I see him in my mind's eye, this German mercenary, promenading through the streets of Frankfurt fresh from God knows what violence he inflicted out there in America with wild Indians, half breeds and crazed Europeans trading... paints for face and body, as much for the corpse as for the living. And here he is with his Indian face, perhaps one half yellow, the other vermillion, asymmetrically joined, the face of world history.⁶⁰⁹



Fig 5.12 Colour runner passing finish line (2014). Source: Sinister Pictures.

In *What Colour is the Sacred*, anthropologist Michael Taussig echoes an image of a German mercenary, described by Goethe in *Theory of Colours*.⁶¹⁰ Upon returning

⁶⁰⁹ Taussig, M. (2006) What Colour is the Sacred? in *Critical Enquiry* vol 33 no 1 p. 28.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

from America, the mercenary's face was brightly coloured in the style of indigenous American and perfectly captured the division between the western habit of chromophobia and the otherwise human habit of chromophilia. These habits form part of a sub or supra-conscious level of consciousness that entwine the human mind and body with the world through the sensuous, transgressive magical 'other' of colour. Starkly visual, the 'face of world history' that Taussig describes is a useful conduit with which to discuss how the visual and the image, historical habits and body politics are bought together in moments of ethnographic fieldwork.

This chapter highlights the scale of the body in examining the multiplicities, temporalities and emotional labour of repair. I examine how happiness moved between human and nonhuman bodies, how it was practiced and how happiness is mobilised through a complex network of different 'engineers'. It shows that ludic practices and events are presented as an important part of developing the reparative, emotional knots that bring together social and cultural difference. Demonstrating that contemporary political discourses around health and wellbeing are charged by happiness, care of the self and the productive possibilities of social cohesion, it argues how recreational and leisure activities are significant in building a reparative infrastructure in the city. Engaging the playful practices of Holi with the mobility of running, I argue that *The Color Run*, *Run or Dye* and other Colour 5s create regimes of happiness and healthiness through the materiality, movement and lucidity of colour. The complex affective state of happiness, entwined within the joyful discourses of colour, is mobilised through playful, convivial, interactive and aestheticising practice. I show that by capturing these engagements through social media platforms, bodies of knowledge around multicultural, health and happiness are reproduced widely in the visual realm, further extending the reach of discourses around colour and happiness. In exploring the significance of Holi, it considers happiness, ludicity and conviviality to explore wider questions around the engagement of others with shared religious experiences in a time of religious decline. These public rituals re-imagine the pursuit of belonging within an increasingly multicultural landscape. These collective celebrations imagine a citizenship that assuages the multicultural anxieties that has promoted government policy to encourage the practical utopianism of cohesion, inclusion and happiness. As a result, drawing on these influences invites us to confront our fears and anxieties of the other in an increasingly multicultural, diverse London.

To reiterate the words of Ash Amin, these practices in many ways demonstrate “habits of solidarity” that link friends and strangers in a ludic and playful exchange.⁶¹¹

In Thrift’s notion of urban maintenance and repair, the affective and emotional bonds that unfold are part of a wider system of keeping the city resilient, strong and robust.⁶¹² Reflecting on the significance of these projects at a critical time of increased cultural hostility, I argue that these events, as inflections and translations of the religion tradition, Holi, are presented as a form of affective and interactional social repair. Tying these ideas back to Melanie Klein’s theory of reparation, this chapter argues that ludic colourful events such as *The Color Run* and *Festival of Colours* link friends and strangers in interactional, playful exchange with deeper political and cultural implications.

The convivial, ludic practices explored in this chapter places embodiment, practice and atmosphere at the centre of the investigation as it takes place, attending to a more thorough engagement with the affective. This chapter also argues that there is successful market in the engineering of happiness for health, and demonstrates how the ludic throwing of colours is an ancient Eastern tradition has turned into a successful, portable, Western cultural phenomenon. However, these practices add a vital affective infrastructure to the cosmopolitan character of London.

Thinking through the productivity of these ludic engagements, the bodily, convivial, experiential scale of this examination of colour highlights the *temporalities* of repair. I argue that the temporality of the creation of a cohesive community in the *Festival of Colours*, social bridges and bonds are formed and dismantled. I show how the temporal ebbing and flowing of atmosphere circulating around and above me in *The Color Run* enacts temporal states of feeling, both positive and negative, cheerful and toxic, playful and combative, shifting between one and the other in multiple moments as colour is passed around, rubbed on and brushed off. The temporality of immersing oneself in another cultural practice blended in the mobile practice of running in *Run or Dye* enacts a healthy bodily repair of keeping fit. In their own unique ways, the role of repair in these practices goes beyond the simple romanticism of maximising individual emotions, but opens up complex questions about the multicultural, the social and the self.

⁶¹¹ Amin, A. (2006) The good city. *Urban Studies*. 43(5). p.1016.

⁶¹² Thrift, N. (2005) But malice afterthought: Cities and the history of hatred. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 30(2). pp. 133-150.

Conclusion

The geographies of colour



The 2014 *Color Run* in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London, has just finished. The last runner, a woman in her early thirties in a tutu, passes the finish line engulfed by coloured powder. While some runners make their way out of the Park, most of them stay on to dance and play at the festival, taking photos to capture the last few colour throws; spectacular and synchronised, with each countdown, a cloud of colour mushrooms up, erupting, before floating away into the atmosphere. For many, this is the last chance to decorate themselves before heading home.

I am sitting on a clean, dry bench looking across the restored river Lea that meanders around the Park. On the other side of the river is the race's kilometre four – the pink zone – now empty. A little Veolia van, tasked with clearing away the excess, drives up to the zone, sucking in the blanket of pink powder that has settled on the tarmac and spewing it out its rear. I watch as it drives up and down, back and forth, hoovering up the wreckage left from the past six hours of orchestrated happiness and play that has drawn runners here today. In clearing away the mess, the volume of powder is so great that it requires the van driver to work hard, swerving, halting, reversing, accelerating, halting, reversing, swerving. After a number of tries, the van driver feels like they have done a good enough job, and drives on to the next kilometre.

Watching the effort to tidy away the colour, I am reminded about the temporality of repair. In this thesis, I have placed myself in discursive, active moments of practice; as a researcher, asking questions about a new, pristine building; a painter, co-producing a mural the outside of an old Bingo hall; and a volunteer orchestrating happiness in *The Color Run*. Moments of my research capture and distil how colour is imagined, practiced and performed from a range of different places and levels of engagement. The long-term durability of the bright cladding of Barking Central is still likely to fade over time. The paint on the outside of Studio3Arts will eventually start to flake and spoil, needing extra layers to keep it fresh. The feelings of happiness, in its natural ebb and flow through the atmospheres of each colour zone and the performance of the volunteers orchestrating these emotional experiences are mutable. However, in accessing this temporality, this thesis has been able to explore the lived, lively relation between colour, space and the body in the moments they unfurl.⁶¹³

Situating this research as a geographic project has highlighted the urban, cultural, health and material geographies of colour, drawing on colour as it emerges in city, the hospital, the neighbourhood, the festival and the mobile practices of running events. From the desk of the architecture practice, to the unfolding performance of happiness

⁶¹³ Fieldnote diary entry: The Veolia van. *The Color Run*. Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London. 28th September 2014.

in the hazy cloud of yellow powder during *The Color Run*, the preceding chapters have attended to the distinctive *geographies* of colour; highlighting colour's relationship to space and the city, bodies and matter, and cultural, embodied and urban practices, and the ways in which repair is enacted.

Summary of findings and future research

This thesis presents colour not as ornamental, superficial or devalued, but as a lens with which to understand the multiple, temporal workings of repair in urban culture. Through a qualitative approach, this thesis exposes colour as a site of disputed knowledges and as a complex process of emotional making. This research has revealed a mix of attitudes towards colour and practice. The practicing architects in Chapter 3, while they were happy to discuss the colour schemes of their buildings, often did not fully create the colour schemes themselves; although happy to *have* colour and be *part* of that decision making, they rejected having total ownership over the final colour design, enlisting Morag Myerscough for Barking Central, Peter Fink for the KPMG City Academy and Frances Tobin for Finchley Memorial Hospital. In reproducing the grey imaginary, the discourses of the Dulux *Let's Colour* project in Chapter 4 reflects a particular repulsion towards uncoloured, grey space, and discriminates against certain colours in the production of lively new urban areas. The yellow fog that consumed everyone during *The Color Run* was both a transducer of happiness and a troubling space to breathe.

In this thesis I have drawn on colour in a range of different practices and places. While colour and emotion have been considered at the bodily level in science, there is a lacunae when it comes to the social and embodied textures that might be presented at a bodily scale, more carefully attuned to the emotions on a geographical and ethnographic level. My positionality in each of these changing sites enabled me to take on particular roles. Thinking about different places and spaces is a productive method to consider the role geography has in this study. For example, the neighbourhood projects presented in Chapter 4, characterised as “local” interventions, are part of a wider creative ownership of space at the hands of capitalist investment and brand marketing tactics promoted by Dulux, who fund the projects to take place. As

such, these territories, as much as they are at a community scale, are commercial, corporate territories, too; reterritorialising the placement of capital. In the city, the political and economic processes around the time of the emergence of the regeneration projects in Chapter 3, as well as the regions which are devalued and re-valued through urban improvement strategies, highlights how place reflects the changing territorial scope of capitalist economics. Through an examination of the different sites and practices, this thesis has demonstrated the real complexity of colour, space and the body from a range of positions and perspectives in the urban landscape.

This research has produced a number of findings and contributions to geographical research and scholarship on colour. My first set of conclusions concerns colour's relationship to urban regeneration. Using a language of repair, colour is presented as re-stitching, transfusing, filling and fixing material, emotional, historical qualities of urban space. The first empirical chapter demonstrates the ways colour is used to weave emotional intensities and identities into new buildings. Using interviews and document analysis, I have demonstrated the disputed knowledges of colour, from the anxious architect and the geography researcher, to the prescriptive colours guides and the embodied knowledge of the expert. Using the hospital and bodily repair as an example, it reveals how colour has been practiced historically and how the hospital environment is being 'concealed' through colour and material culture. Challenging idiographic approaches to colour and the emotions, this chapter demonstrates not only the range of knowledges emergent in practitioners' narratives, but establishes the role the body plays *in* practice; sensing which colours work best and drawing on intuitive responses. Colour in the architectural imagination is a blend of practical decisions and tacit knowledges, and in this chapter, I have argued how colour is part of the processes of repair.

Developing this part of my research further, I propose a deeper ethnographic engagement with the processes and decisions made when colour comes together in architectural design. By following the work of anthropologist Albena Yaneva's ethnography *Made by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture: An Ethnography of Design*, a more in depth account of the design rhythms in architectural practice would supply further insight into these complex processes.⁶¹⁴ Although this would have added an ethnographic dimension to my architectural findings, it takes a number of years of

⁶¹⁴ Yaneva, A. (2009) *Made by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture: An Ethnography of Design*. Rotterdam. 010 Publishers.

engagement in order to fully see through the colour design process of a building, something beyond the scope of a PhD. For example, Barking Central was picked up by AHMM in 2002, and completed in 2010. Although I was not able to undertake an ethnography of architectural practice, I was still inspired by Yaneva's work and her presentation of ethnographic material as storytelling devices. This ethnographic engagement could equally extend to working with a colour consultant on the making of colour schemes and the diagnostic approach I have demonstrated through my conversations with Frances Tobin.

The second set of conclusions uses the Dulux *Let's Colour* project to demonstrate an example of the formation of a vitalist colour imaginary. The discourses of bold urban colour giving life, restoring hope and repairing the material condition of space, as seen in the example of Tirana and the workings of Haas and Hahn, reproduces this notion. I argue that the reproduction of the relationship between colour and urban change, situated within a political landscape empowering local communities and public policies around urban renewal, is key to the project's success. I have argued that beyond the coats of paint lies a range of capitalist logics, corporate social responsibility and branding strategies by Dulux. As a global colouring intervention, the *Let's Colour* project is in tension between facilitating urban repair and achieving sustainability targets.

As an option for further research, the popularity of community colouring initiatives across the globe, particularly Brazil, invites an opportunity to study the working of a larger scale colouring intervention in conjunction with artists or the community. An ethnographic study like this would also enable the researcher to question how these changing spaces feel to community members and assess the long-term effect of these initiatives. Secondly, a political and economic geography of the successful and unsuccessful applications to the *Let's Colour* project, or similar community initiatives, could reveal provocative results raising questions around the geographies of deprivation in nominated areas.

The third set of conclusions is a result of an embodied ethnographic approach to colour. My ethnographies revealed a number of reflections on colour, emotion and sociality and in particular, the complex making of emotion and the role performance, interaction and labour played. Challenging causal interpretations of colour and emotion, my findings demonstrate the 'work' of making emotional space. My findings from observing performances and practices at the *Festival of Colours* revealed a

productive conviviality and interaction in social space, which I argue facilitates the relationship repairs central to the traditional Holi festival. This final empirical chapter attends to the rich performances of repair and the role colour plays in these acts.

The methodological approach taken in the final empirical chapter opens up the potential for further research on running geographies and participation in events where the focus of fun is given greater emphasis over competition. A study of the health promoting practices of themed five kilometre races is an opportunity to gain an insight into fitness practices disguised as play.

Although each empirical chapter approaches colour and repair from different scales and approaches, the three chapters speak to one another. In chapter 5, the consideration of multicultural, whiteness and colour resonates with the lively, colourful neighbourhoods evoked in chapter 4 and the subsequent commodification of multicultural that emerges in both of these practices. Furthermore, the critical place of the superficial and the cosmetic runs through all three of the empirical work this thesis does, in the revitalising decoration of Hackney, to enlivening grey neighbourhood spaces down the road from Gascoigne Estate in Barking Estate and the application of *gula* to the faces of young females taking part in the *Color Run*.

The geographies of colour

In this thesis I have researched the geographies of colour using a vast range of different texts, materials and approaches, including in-depth interviews, focus groups, documents, architectural information packs, application forms and documentaries. The thread running through the core of this research and connecting each empirical chapter is repair. I have demonstrated how repair is a productive conceptual tool, traced through the geographies of health, the body, and urban and cultural geographies, when studying colour. In each empirical chapter I have demonstrated the uniqueness of repair, emerging in different ways, in different places and with different means to different ends.

During this research I have painted walls, observed Holi, thrown colour in peoples faces when I should not and had people throw colour at me in places in equally rebellious manners. One of the key contributions this thesis makes is on its development of *repair*. Considering repair from different urban scales and through

different levels of practice, the critical reading of the pursuits analysed in this thesis mobilises a new reading of repair that accounts for its multiple politics in the chromatic field. Another key contribution this thesis makes in is in its methodological approach to the study of colour; examining colour qualitatively, practically and from a range of positions. Reflecting on my own experience of researching colour, this thesis demonstrates the emotionality of participation in research and the valuable knowledge that can be produced by paying attention to the emotions in practice and the embodied work it involves.

The main aim of this thesis and the distinctive contribution it makes is in the way we *think* about colour. Away from positivist notions, laboratory studies, mock ups and measured emotional response, this thesis has developed an original way of thinking about colour in relation to geography. This development took place in the geographies of the city, highlighting colour's relationship to urban space, regeneration, and local renewal projects, and cultural practices that sits in the good company of cognate geographic research on light and art. Colour, in all its ubiquity and years of philosophical quarrels, has been obscured in geography. As such, the aim of this thesis is to bring the geography of colour to life.



Fig 6 Final colour throw. *The Color Run*, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London. September 2014. Source: Author's own.

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